A Case Study: Programs for Black Males at Predominantly White Institutions

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

A CASE STUDY: PROGRAMS FOR BLACK MALES AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

By

Liana C. Mentor

A DISSERTATION

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A CASE STUDY: PROGRAMS FOR BLACK MALES AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

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Despite prevailing evidence of black males underperforming in comparison to their peers, there are programs that illuminate potential pathways PWIs have utilized to support success of Black males on college campuses. A multiple-case study approach was utilized to describe and examine three existing programs for Black males at PWIs that are designed to support their undergraduate academic and social experiences. This study describes how best practices and curricula of programs for black males at PWIs play an instrumental role in developing interpersonal relationships which may benefit the academic achievement and overall well-being of black males in addition to enhancing cross-campus relationships for the institution.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine programs specifically designed to support the academic achievement (e.g., retention and graduation) and well-being (e.g., emotional support and sense of belonging) of Black male undergraduate students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Specifically, this study examined the practices PWIs across the United States have adopted, developed, or established to support Black male college students. This study describes the impact of individual factors, such as race-related stress, self-concept, academic disidentification, and ecological influences, such as campus climate and networks of social support on the academic achievement and well-being of these Black males. Additionally, this study examined how academic support programs for Black males may influence the institution. This study describes how best practices and curricula of programs for Black males at PWIs play an instrumental role in developing interpersonal relationships which may benefit the academic achievement and overall well-being of Black males in addition to enhancing cross-campus relationships for the institution.

The study utilized a multiple-case study approach to describe (and examine) three existing programs for Black males at PWIs that are designed to support their undergraduate academic and social experiences. Each case study included interviews with administrators and students, that focused on program curriculum and practices, administrative roles, and student impact. Semi-structured interview guides were utilized to collect responses along with the analysis of program documents. Lastly, thematic
analysis was employed to elucidate themes, commonalties, differences, and relative sources of influence.

**Significance of Study**

While the number of Black students enrolled in four-year institutions continue to rise, there is a significant achievement gap between Black and White students (Sellers, Chavous, & Cooke, 1998). Achievement gap has been defined as “…the disparity in academic performance between groups of students,” (2011, July 7); which is further exacerbated when examining across race/ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic background.

As reported by the U.S. Department of Education (2017), there is also a 24% graduation rate gap between Black and White college students that has persisted over the last 20 years. This is contributed to the fact that for over the last 10-15 years, approximately 20% of Black students drop out of college between freshman and sophomore years, compared to 11% of White students (Aud et al., 2010, p. 116). The achievement gap is particularly of concern for Black male college students, as compared to all other populations, including their Black female peers. Currently, the 6-year graduation rate for Black females is 44%, whereas, the graduation rate for Black men is at 34% (Department of Education, 2017). Black men remain the least likely to graduate from a postsecondary institution within the six-year national graduation rate from a postsecondary institution (Reid, 2013). Despite the increased enrollment of Black college students, Black males’ rates of completing a four-year degree remain problematic. Therefore, it is critically important to extend the current literature on Black male achievement in higher education to develop an understanding of the complex interaction
between personal and ecological dynamics that explain the persistently poor outcomes. This study explored individual factors and contextual factors that may contribute to this achievement gap.

The lived experiences of Black male college students may pose significant challenges to their academic achievement as well as their social development, and emotional well-being. Harper (2007) identified several individual factors, such as level of college preparedness, socioeconomic background, self-concept, racial identity, and familial background (i.e. single-family household, and/or first-generation college-status) that contribute to student success.

Additional factors that have been reported to influence Black male students’ success include psychosocial obstacles. These may include race-related stress, self-concept, academic disidentification and feelings of marginalization on college campuses (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Osborne, 1999; Cokley et al., 2012). Each of these factors may be the result of negative or limited interactions with faculty of color and/or a poor sense of belonging as the minority population on a predominantly White campus (Allen, 1992). Individual barriers like these may contribute to a climate of stress and psychological pressure which could detract from students’ ability to engage, focus, and excel academically and/or socially.

Previous research emphasizes the importance of Black males’ college experiences include relationships with other Black students and Black faculty (Allen, 1992; Harper and Quaye 2007). It has been reported that the absence of these interactions greatly impacts students’ academic achievement and well-being. Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings, 1998) provides an ecological, explanatory framework for why Black
males struggle to adapt in majority white spaces (e.g. PWIs). Specifically, CRT reorients research on race and education toward acknowledging the role of White Supremacy and the structural, instrumental and ideological processes that thwart Black achievement (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). Black male college students are expected to navigate majority white campuses that were created and are maintained without the kinds of resources necessary for the success of diverse and underserved populations. Additionally, they are expected to perform well academically and quickly adapt to an environment where they are perceived as an inferiorized minority. Elements of this study may provide a more comprehensive understanding for why and how universities can address Black males or create Black spaces (e.g. programs for Black males) and relationships that facilitate success at PWIs.

Largely missing from the literature on programs for Black male students at PWIs, is how Community Psychology (CP) can be used to better understand contextual factors of programs at PWIs and the ways context may influence the academic achievement and well-being of Black male students. Maton et al., (1996; 2000) and Sellers, Chavous, and Cooke (1998) have utilized Community Psychology frameworks to examine academic achievement among URM students to shift the discourse about disparities in educational outcomes from being located within individuals and microsystems, and instead highlight multi-level features of school, peer and family networks that support learning. Much of the literature on Black male college academic achievement, however, has come from the higher education literature that invokes climate but has not relied upon well-established theories and constructs of Community Psychology to characterize outcomes as a complex interplay between both person and ecological factors (Lewin, 1943). Additionally,
previous literature suggests that programs for Black males have influence on retention and graduation rates of the students, however, the social processes engendered by programs that may be the underlying mechanisms that support success has been largely ignored. For example, how might a sense of community develop within programs focused on Black male students, or how do programs help to establish mutually reinforcing or repairing relationships across the campus that shift perspectives, reduce stereotypes and create room for all students to achieve? The current study fills this gap by connecting CP constructs with a persistent challenge represented in the higher education literature.

The field of CP is grounded in the exploration of the context (e.g. settings) in which people from diverse populations effectively adapt, function, and relate in various settings and environments effectively (Kloos et al., 2012). The school setting, specifically, college campuses, exemplify the multifaceted nature of settings outlined by Trickett (2009) and Hawe et al. (2009). Hurtado et al. (1998, p. 296) further define campus environments as, “…complex social systems defined by the relationships between the people, bureaucratic procedures, structural arrangements, institutional goals and values, traditions, and larger socio-historical environments. For example, college campuses are settings where social networks and interactions between people occur across different levels—peer to peer, student to faculty, student organizations/activities, and employee to employee – as well as over time, with constant recycling and converting of assets with new cohorts, faculty, administrators, policies, programs and organizations shifting constantly. Typical day-to-day experiences in a college setting may include: academic advising, student-professor interactions, campus involvement, and social
support from peers and administration which are specifically vital for the academic achievement of Black male students at PWIs (Harper & Quaye, 2007). By applying a Community Psychology lens to the literature (Trickett, 2009), the programs for Black males at PWIs could be viewed as key indicators of how well Black men thrive on predominantly White campuses and how programs that support them also impact the institution.

Relevant to this study, CP also emphasizes the role of programs and procedures, to evaluate how effectively systems are addressing the targeted need of specific populations and/or historically underserved communities and provides recommendations that assist these programs to better function (Kloos et al., 2012). Therefore, programs established to facilitate achievement and well-being of Black men on predominately White campuses could be considered ideal ecological settings for interventions to be enacted, given the nature of the ecology as dynamic, evolving and open to change. However, questions remain regarding the nature of specific programming for Black male students in terms of the specific elements that can positively influence academic achievement. The research questions that guide the current study reflect the multi-level and multi-dimensional nature of phenomena as outlined by CP, as well as the importance between person and environment as a determinant of behavior and outcomes.

**Research Questions**

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. Why was the program created?
2. How are curricula and practices of the program utilized?
   2b. How are outcomes measured in the program?
3. How does the program influence the participants?

3b. How does the program influence the institution?

Definition of Terms

**Academic achievement.** Academic achievement (Fan and Chen, 2001) has been defined as measures which include all aspects of academic performance: GPA, entrance exam scores, and in some cases, other outcomes that generally include ratings of the instructor and indicators of academic self-concept. In this study, academic achievement pertains to the academic performance, specifically college GPA, graduation, and retention rate outcomes for Black males at PWIs.

**Academic support.** Academic support refers to advising, tutoring, and/or academic planning the programs in this study may offer for Black men at their institution.

**Achievement gap.** Achievement gap has been defined as “…the disparity in academic performance between groups of students,” (2011, July 7).

**Black/African American (AA) male college students.** Male undergraduate students of African and/or Caribbean who descent racially identify as Black or African American. In this study, the terms Black and African American will be used interchangeably.

**Campus climate.** Rankin and Reason (2008, p.264) defined campus climate as, "…the current attitudes, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities and potential.”

**Engagement.** Tinto (1975; 2010) defined engagement as “…being active, participating, and engaged member of the college community as measured by an
observable set of behaviors.” In this study, the terms engagement and involvement will be used interchangeably.

**Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).** This term is used to describe colleges and universities whose campus student population is comprised of 40-50% or more Caucasian/White students (Brown, Dancy, & Davis, 2013) This term describes the types of institutions being investigated that house programs of support for Black/African American men on their campuses.

**Retention.** This term is defined as the “…the measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution,” (Voigt and Hundrieser, 2008, p.3).

**Social climate.** Moos (2003, p. 1) defined social climate as, “…the 'personality' of a setting or environment, such as a family, a workplace, a social or task-oriented group, or a classroom; like people, environments differ in how restrictive and controlling they are.” In this study, campus climate will refer to interpersonal relationships between Black male students and their interactions/encounters with faculty, administrators, and/or their peers.

**Social network.** Social networks have been defined as, “…a set of relationships among individuals,” (Israel, 1985, p. 66). Relevant to this study, social networks may include relationships which develop between faculty, staff, and peers that create a sense of community (Maton, 2000) in which they support one another both academically and socially.

**Stereotype threat.** Steele and Aronson (1995), defined stereotype threat as “…a disruptive psychological state the people experience when they feel a risk for confirming
a negative stereotype associated with their social identity—their race, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation.”

**Student involvement.** Astin (1999) referred to student involvement as “…the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience.” In this study, the terms *involvement and engagement* will be used interchangeably.

**Well-being.** Well-being has been described as “a positive state of affairs, brought about the synergistic satisfaction of personal, organizational, and collective needs of individuals, organizations, and communities alike,” (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006, p.12). Well-being does not solely focus on “…the matter of individual health, but rather a transaction between individuals and their environments,” (Kloos et al., 2012, p.24). Well-being will refer to a sense of belonging, the emotional and psychosocial development for Black males at PWIs.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

The literature examining Black males’ experiences in college is copious and highlights several important barriers to achievement as well as factors that facilitate student success. Overall, the extant literature from Community Psychology and Higher Education has emphasized factors that can be broadly categorized as representing both facilitators and barriers for Black male students at PWIs, which include psychosocial and ecological constructs. From this literature, it seems clear there are several essential components for the support of Black male college students other than academic and financial support. While the literature highlights the importance of understanding the psychosocial factors, ecological context, and networks of social support, few studies have examined multiple contributors to academic achievement and well-being that are established by the institution.

A CP framework can fill in the gap in the extant evidence for Black male academic achievement that locates the issues and interventions at the individual or microsystem level. What is missing from the literature is an ecologically comprehensive understanding of the various components and themes that influence students who are enrolled in an academic support program designed to facilitate success. To explain variation in academic success as a function of ecological components, the current study examined programs that serve Black male college students and are designed to enhance academic achievement and well-being. Viewing the programs as settings within systems (e.g. PWIs), the interactions and development that may occur become catalysts which impact various relationships (e.g. faculty to student, peer to peer, department to
department, etc.) that then may result in a more inclusive environment for Black males to thrive. Research has heavily focused on individual factors, potentially ignoring the degree to which Black males’ academic achievement and well-being are both impacted by the setting itself. The proposed study highlights the relative contribution of factors related to success that are embedded in the ecologies of predominantly White college campuses through intentionally designed support programs. Therefore, a Community Psychology framework provides a different lens to understand this phenomenon contextually rather than how it is in the literature currently, which is based on individual factors.

**Psychosocial Factors: Race Related Stress, Academic Self-Concept, and Academic Disidentification**

Extensive research has covered the psychosocial development of college students. Psychosocial development for college students has been described as, “… the process of successfully negotiating the demands associated with various domains of student life (e.g. academics, interpersonal relationships, identity, etc.),” Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p.24). Generally, most college students encounter the typical stress of adjusting to coursework, making crucial decisions, coping with possible home sickness, and working on time management techniques. Conversely, Black male college students on predominately White campuses may be attempting to balance these typical challenges and negotiate psychosocial factors such as race-related stress, self-concept, and academic disidentification that may influence their academic achievement and well-being.

**Race-related stress.** Race-related stress has been reported to be one of the most common stressors faced by Black males at PWI’s (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Race-related stress is, “the psychological discomfort that results from a situation or event that
an individual appraises as troubling because racial discrimination or isolation,” (Plummer & Slane, 1996, p. 303). Previous studies have found that Black male students on predominantly White campuses encounter various types of stress that hinder their emotional and academic development. Neville et al. (2004) and Negga et al. (2007) found that Black students at PWIs attempt to manage typical stress due to adjustment to coursework, time management, decision-making, but also cope with race-related stress both inside and outside of the classroom, an approach which impedes on their academic achievement. For example, a professor or classmate may assume that a Black male student is an athlete or expecting a Black student to represent the only perspective for the entire Black race during class discussions. For Black males’ at PWIs, race-related stress may occur when they attempt to establish academic support, attend class, and form relationships with faculty or peers. These experiences may exacerbate feelings of isolation due to limited faculty and students of color (Allen, 1992). Therefore, race-related stress may be a psychosocial factor that limits the success of Black male college students.

A related factor that has been researched regarding performance specific to academic achievement and health disparities among populations of color is stereotype threat. Steele and Aronson (1995), defined stereotype threat as “…a disruptive psychological state the people experience when they feel a risk for confirming a negative stereotype associated with their social identity—their race, gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation.” Black males tend to experience stereotype threat consciously and unconsciously, which harms their ability to understand content clearly, perform at their
highest level, and in some cases, develop interpersonal relationships with people belonging to another group, specifically on predominately White campuses.

**Academic self-concept.** Related to research on stereotype threat (Steele, 1995; 1997; Aronson, Fried, and Good, 2002), academic self-concept and self-perception have been reported as psychosocial indicators that may influence Black students’ academic achievement at PWIs as well. Academic self-concept can be summarized as students’ academic perception of themselves on an academic level (e.g. performance, skill, capability); it also has been noted as one of the strongest indicators of GPA, (Cokley, 2000). Cokley’s (2000) study of Black/African American students’ self-concept and academic performance of Black students’ academic performance (e.g. G.P.A) found that participants who attended an HBCU had higher levels of academic self-concept due to more positive interactions with faculty both inside and outside the classroom in comparison to those who attended a PWI. Similarly, Black male students’ self-perception, of how students view themselves as students both personally and academically (Allen, 1992), has been found to be affected by on-campus experiences such as not feeling as though they belong due to the limited number of Black peers and faculty in the classroom setting or as a member of a student organization (e.g. academically and socially). For example, Allen (1992) found that when Black students’ self-perception is negative, levels of self-esteem, goal setting, comfort with faculty, and campus engagement are affected.

Also, gender differences among Black students likely exist. It has been asserted that Black males have different needs to adapt, develop, and achieve on predominantly White campuses not only in comparison to their White peers but also with their Black
female peers (Cuyjet, 1997; Hall & Rowan 2000). Gibbs’ (1992) research along with Connell, Halpem-Felsher Clifford, Crichlow, and Usinger, (1995) indicate that African American/Black males lived-experiences in familial, community, and academic settings are perceived as discouraging for their success in comparison to their Black female counterparts. Additionally, Connell et, al.’s study of African American males (1995), concluded that Black males’ self-concept is influenced by various cognitive, emotional, and circumstantial factors that affect their academic achievement. For example, socially, Black females and males can be perceived differently in majority White social settings; Black men may be perceived as aggressive, not academically fit, and threatening, while Black females may be stamped with the stigma of being angry or having a negative attitude (Cuyjet, 1997). With societal stereotypes imposed on Black men and women, both genders’ capabilities to excel are influenced and therefore require targeted attention and resources that offset the consequences of being stereotyped. Black males may have “unique needs,” in White campus settings that may foster positive models of masculinity (Cuyjet, 1997, p. 5-9). Programs on predominantly White campuses may need to assess what practices and resources are differentiated by gender based on unique and specific programming that allow all students to evolve socially and thrive academically in healthy ways.

Academic achievement and well-being have been examined on college campuses (e.g. PWIs and HBCUs) to understand how gender and racial identity may impact psychosocial development in the university setting. Cokley (2001) defined psychosocial development as “racial identity, academic self-concept, and academic motivation,” (p. 481). Cokley also examined whether differences in psychosocial development were
present between male and female college students and found that the gender of the student was an important trait to consider for Black students, particularly, when considering academic motivation. In the study, Black female participants’ academic performance (e.g. GPA) and scores on various scales measuring racial identity, academic motivation, and self-concept, were slightly higher than Black males’ (Cokley, 2001). The study suggested that among other student populations (e.g. ethnicities and gender), Black male college students are more inclined to have lower levels of academic motivation, (Ford & Harris, 1996; Cokley 2001). In sum, (Harper, 2007; Lee, 1991) along with societal stereotypes, adjustment to the college environment comes with additional challenges of isolation and race-related stress both inside and outside the classroom which inherently impacts self-perception, retention, and graduation rates of Black male college students.

**Academic disidentification.** Researchers have examined differences between White and Black male students with regard to self-concept and academic disidentification. Academic disidentification occurs when students’ level of involvement with their academic interests and responsibilities significantly declines (Steele, 1997; Cokley & Moore, 2007). Beasley, Miller, and Cokely (2014, p.5) summarized Major and Schmader’s (1998) past research on academic disidentification as “…one coping strategy some Black males utilize in response to chronic stigma and negative stereotypes in educational contexts.” As a result of academic disidentification, students may begin to feel negatively about their abilities, which impacts their overall self-esteem and, in some cases, leads to dropping out of school.
Research further indicates that while all kinds of students can experience academic disidentification, it is considerably higher among Black males, (Osborne, 1999; Cokley & Moore, 2007). One study (Cokley, 2002) tested the relationship between self-concept and self-esteem with academic performance (e.g. GPA). This study revealed that with Black and White freshmen and sophomores, academic self-concept is associated with academic performance (e.g. GPA), but not for Black male juniors and seniors.

Cokley (2002) reported Osborne’s (1995; 1997) extensive studies on academic disidentification and race indicate before entering a college, Black males have already disidentified with their academic performance over time. Osborne’s findings supported the finding that White female students displayed positive academic self-concept and self-esteem while continuing through their academic career. However, the more time Black males are in school, the more disengaged they become from their self-perception and academic capabilities, the more connected they become to social activities (e.g. sports, Black affiliated campus clubs/organizations), where they are able to connect with other Black students and administrators (Cokley, 2001; 2002; Harper & Quaye, 2007).

Based on the literature, Black males have specific challenges related to self-concept, disidentification, academic performance (e.g. GPA). Evidence suggests that the correlation between academic self-concept and GPA is stronger for females than Black males (McClain and Cokley, 2016; Cokley, 2002; Cokley et al., 2012). Therefore, to better understand academic achievement and well-being among college students, assessing gender differences in self-concept could improve the development of academic and emotional support mechanisms for different populations of students, particularly Black male students.
In spite of issues that Black male college students may face, there is evidence that exposure to a healthy learning environment and positive social interactions are critical to the success of this group. It appears that Black students at PWIs may benefit psychosocially and academically when they have healthy interactions and experiences with faculty (Allen, 1992; Gloria, 1999; Hurtado et al., 1998; Harper, 2007). Therefore, self-concept and self-perception within both academic and psychosocial domains is essential in explaining and understanding the academic success for Black male college students at PWIs.

**Ecological Context**

The environment of a college campus has been reported to be a key predictor of how well Black students thrive. Aside from academic and social support, how an institution is structured can affect how Black students perform (D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993). Previous research has demonstrated that the environment on predominantly White campuses can act as a barrier to Black students’ academic achievement as a result of lack of support from fellow peers, limited faculty of color, lack of mentorship, and feelings of ostracization both inside and outside the classroom (Gloria et al., 1999). Similarly, Fazio (1977) examined the cultural congruency of a predominantly White campus by surveying the levels of stress, angst, and overall fulfillment among Black students. In comparison to the White students, the Black students had more difficulty adapting to the campus, which inhibited their academic pursuits. More accessibility to faculty of color (Allen, 1992) who may also play the role of mentors, may decrease some of the negative experiences Black students encounter on a
predominately White campus. In these studies, the lack of racial congruency in campus ecologies appears to engender a cascade of barriers to success.

**Campus environment/climate.** Campus climate has been explicitly examined to better understand the quality of life for students on campus as well as the types of diversity issues that institutions may face. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) reported that the encounters students have with students from diverse backgrounds, not only influence students’ academic and social outcomes but also have an influence on campuses’ overall climate. The administrators, faculty, and policy makers of institutions have been described as agents for socialization on college campuses (Tinto, 1975; 2010; Evans et. al, 2010). Therefore, when students attend college, they are introduced to a variety of diverse encounters with students from different ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds that are likely to influence their personal and academic experience. Rankin and Reason’s (2005) study of how the perceptions of campus climate found major differences between underrepresented minority (URM) and White students such that students of color reported experiences that were dissimilar from their White peers. Specifically, minority students perceived the campus climate to be more racially hostile in contrast to their White counterparts. Additionally, the URM students expressed (a) a weaker sense of belonging both inside and outside the classroom and (b) a feeling of being disconnected from faculty because there were limited faculty of color. Greater institutional efforts to foster a more welcoming environment with race as the construct in mind, may improve experiences for all students and members of the campus.

The racial composition of a campus environment clearly can be a factor that can influence Black male students’ level of engagement on a campus. Tinto (1975; 2010) has
consistently described campus engagement as an important aspect of understanding how students are developing within the ecology of a campus. Flynn (2014, p. 469) characterized Tinto’s concept of engagement as, “…being active, participating, and an engaged member of the college community as measured by an observable set of behaviors.” Essentially, for students to be engaged, there may need to be regular interaction between the student, the faculty, and the institution. By Black males not engaging with the campus community, their levels of academic interest and development are negatively influenced; their ability to make clear decisions, conclusions, and a feeling of sense of belonging are adversely affected (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999). On predominantly White campuses, Black men tend to not engage with faculty or student organizations unless they are Black/African American affiliated organizations/clubs (Harper, 2007). It has been asserted that beyond individual and institutional factors, both academic and social student engagement behaviors significantly affect graduation rates (Flynn, 2014). Therefore, an important aspects of academic success are racial composition and campus climate as well as the degree to which these factors influence academic and social engagement for Black men attending predominantly White campuses.

HBCUs have established an infrastructure within their campuses that promote an environment where Black students feel welcome and academically and personally supported (Benton, 2001). Regardless of students’ individual barriers such as socioeconomic background, college preparedness, test scores, and/or high school G.PA. The HBCU model represents a philosophy such that “…colleges attempt to educate and graduate all students who are admitted,” (Benton, 2001, p.25). This likely means that
HBCUs, in general, attempt to meet each student where they are on an academic and personal level, and provide them with the necessary support to persist and graduate. Differently from PWIs, where the general focus may be more strictly based on test scores, high school G.P.A, and in some cases, the socioeconomic background of who is admitted into the institution (Allen, 1992). Given this difference, it may be that PWIs are not as familiar with the types of environmental support that needed for Black students to persist academically, thrive psychosocially, and to successfully graduate than HBCUs. It appears, HBCU’s may provide an environmental context that PWI’s may not have a considered. Mirroring an HBCU model may help PWIs better develop ecological contexts that help Black students, and specifically Black male students thrive academically and socially (Benton, 2001). Even though Black students are not considered underrepresented minority (URM) students at historically Black institutions, the personal attention, mentoring, and cultural connection with faculty and peers of color could be incorporated into predominantly White institutions.

**Networks of social support.** An important facet of the college environment is the formation and re-formation of social networks, which may be particularly essential for underrepresented students. The term social network has been defined in several ways. Relevant to this study, Israel (1985, p. 66) summarized a social network as, “…a set of relationships among individuals,” which has numerous characteristics that can be characterized along three dimensions: structural, interactional, and functional. Each of these dimensions can be found in studies examining various types of social support network on college campuses. The structural dimension signifies the level of connections within a network as well as the number of connections. The interactional dimension
references the type of relationships occurring within a network and whether reciprocal relationships exist. The functional dimension refers to the emotional and substantial support that a network provides to a community (Israel, 1985). Functional characteristics of a social network are not limited to peer support but also healthy interactions with faculty, administrators, and in some cases, programs of support (Israel, 1985). When a considerable amount of emotional and academic support is present, Black male students may have the opportunity to build relationships that contribute positively to their college experience and personal development. Therefore, the functional dimension of support could be considered the most significant for Black male students’ academic achievement and well-being.

Social networks are important for college student success in general, but perhaps more critical for Black males. Specifically, researchers have emphasized the importance of building networks of social support within a setting for URM students (Maton, Hrabowski, & Schmitt, 2000). Importantly, these networks may evolve from various forms of intervention such as academic support programs targeting Black men (Cohen, Underwood, & Gottlieb, 2000). Mechanisms of support may include, but are not limited to, personal resources such as mentoring, student-faculty and peer to peer interactions, opportunities that may improve a sense of belonging and inclusion for Black male students (Kloos et al., 2012). Clearly, the availability of social support networks could potentially influence the experiences and outcomes of Black men in college.

An obstacle Black males in college may encounter is the cultivation of networks of support that include Black faculty and university administrators at PWIs. Research demonstrates, when there is limited to no exposure to Black faculty and administrators,
Black male students experience a weaker sense of belonging that affects their academic persistence (Davis, 1994). Support from faculty and administrators, whether minority or not, can be beneficial. Gloria et al.’s (1999) study of exposure to mentoring and social support among Black students at a PWI indicated that when Black students had more interaction and mentoring from faculty and administrators, academic persistence and a sense of belonging were positively influenced. From the literature (Allen, 1992; Gloria et al., 1999; Harper, 2007) it can be assumed that social support from faculty and administrators may be essential for Black students’ academic success and inclusion at PWIs, particularly Black males.

Resources and needs vary based on the race and gender of individuals. Maton et al. (1996), conducted three studies with African American and White youth examining the various types of social support necessary for their well-being and development (e.g. psychosocially and academically) within different contexts. Two of the three studies focused on the freshmen year and “young adulthood,” which ranged from 15-29 years old. The studies revealed that support from peers and family were more essential for African Americans than White, especially when functioning in majority White spaces, (Maton et al., 1996). Understanding the essential resources for diverse groups is important for PWIs to be proactive in applying this existing research findings to interventions and best practices for the successful matriculation of students from underrepresented backgrounds, specifically for Black males.

Networks of social support may develop from programs that have been established to address and support the academic and social experiences for them specifically at predominately White institutions. Based on the current literature, social
and emotional-support for Black men at PWIs play an essential role that influence their achievement and well-being. One example is the Meyerhoff Scholars Program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). The Meyerhoff program is limited to underrepresented minority (URM) students studying in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields, primarily African American students. The program provides a holistic blueprint for how institutions can cultivate a healthy academic and social environment that supports student achievement and well-being. Maton et al. (2000) referenced key components of the program that contribute to the success of the URM students in the program, which cover a wide range of support. The program includes full financial support (e.g. tuition, books, room and board), tutoring, academic advising, and research opportunities where students can focus on their studies free of distraction. Program staff are charged with attempting to address various emotional or psychosocial issues students may encounter. In addition to these substantial components of the program, students are encouraged to connect with their respective peers to support one another academically and emotionally (Maton et al., 2000). For example, along with targeting advising and counseling, students have access to administrators who can help them navigate the university system and their course work. According to Maton et al. (2000), this creates an atmosphere described as a “program community,” which is defined as “…providing a family-like social and academic support system for students,” (p.633). In this type of setting, URM students are encouraged to connect with and support one another academically and emotionally as peers.

Despite prevailing evidence of Black men underperforming in comparison to their peers, there are programs that illuminate potential pathways PWIs are utilizing to support
educational success of Black men on their campuses. Cuyjet’s “African American Men in College, (2006) provides brief descriptions of nine programs that have been established to support the successes of Black men on college campuses. For example, two programs with laudable success rates are the “Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB)” organization (multiple university-wide chapters) and the “Black Men’s Collective,” (BMC) at Rutgers University. SAAB is a national organization which has been in existence for about 27 years that was established to support academic success and student life development of Black men in college which include PWIs, HBCUs, and community colleges, (Cuyjet, 2006). Initially, SAAB chapters’ primary goal was to improve their college campus experiences for Black men with support that ranges from academic, social, and post college planning to name a few. When SAAB chapters are established on campuses, the chapter is structured to fulfill a campus’ specific need(s). Accounting for the specific needs of a campus, SAAB incorporates the organization’s six major components which are: personal development service, academic, financial affairs, spiritual-enrichment/social, and membership/public relations, (Cuyjet, 2006, p. 259). For example, if an institution’s problem area for Black males is a lack of community, the chapter would focus primarily on creating a sense of community via campus community outreach initiatives (e.g. working with Black alumni of SAAB or connecting SAAB participants with faculty of color). Community service, programs focusing on post college plans, and mentoring are heavily emphasized in the SAAB curriculum. Efforts of SAAB are facilitated by committees comprised of faculty and departmental administration on each campus which enhances the fostering of interpersonal relations between faculty/administrators and Black male students. Currently, chapters of the
SAAB organization (2014) exist on over 200 campuses and has extended organizational efforts for both Black and Latino male middle and high school students.

Similar to the SAAB program, the “Black Men’s Collective,” (BMC) at Rutgers University was established to improve an area of concern defined by the institution for Black men attending Rutgers which was retention (Cuyjet, 2006). Created over 20 years ago, BMC aimed to enhance the interpersonal relationships among Black male students with their peers, faculty, and alumni to generate dialogue that address the attrition, student development, and empowerment of Black men at Rutgers. The program emphasizes that the benefit of connecting Black males from different life experiences is two-fold. First, BMC connects Black male students from all backgrounds to better understand that experiences vary for all Black male students based on their familial background, socioeconomic status, and how they self-identify racially. Secondly, as the students in the BMC interact with mentors (e.g. Black male faculty, administrators, and alumni) involved with BMC, the mentors are also exposed to the various perspectives of Black male students at Rutgers. Diverse interactions enable the mentors to better assist with retaining and empowering this underrepresented population of students. Coupled with workshops about life skills and current events influencing the Black men in society, peer mentoring and leadership opportunities are heavily encouraged in the BMC. The BMC is an example of a program that facilitates an environment which encourages healthy relationships between the students and their peers as well as with mentors. 

Several PWIs have established additional programs to address the retention of Black males. Retention is a commonly used term in education defined as “…the measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at an institution,” (Voigt
and Hundrieser, 2008, p.3). It has been reported that during freshmen year, Black males are faced with challenges transitioning socially which interfere with how they adjust academically, (Brooks, Jones, & Burt, 2013). For example, a Black male student at a PWI may be the only Black male on their dormitory floor. Additionally, some Black males may find a limited number of clubs or organizations to choose from as they attempt to get involved with student life activities. These challenges indicate that Black males may require additional support that keeps them engaged with the campus community.

According to Tinto (2006), successful retention programs for URM students incorporate academic and cultural practices which foster opportunities where faculty-student relationships can develop. One study found that retention-based programs aid in the academic achievement of Black males by encompassing academic support (e.g., tutoring), post-graduation preparation, and mentoring sessions led by faculty (Brooks, Jones, & Burt, 2013). The study emphasizes the influence that healthy campus relationships (e.g. peer to peer and faculty to student) have on Black male students.

Social networks of support and interpersonal relationships appear to be common aspects of successful programs for Black men at PWIs. It appears that students enrolled in programs like SAAB, BMC, and Meyerhoff, benefit from the additional direct and indirect social support and relationships that evolve. The sense of community and relationships that formed in these programs may assist with Black men on predominantly White campuses cultivating experiences with peers and faculty outside of the program.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the fields of Community Psychology (CP) and Higher Education (HE). Moos’ Social Climate dimensions and
Astin’s Theory of Involvement served as frameworks for this investigation. These frameworks were used because they provide a multifaceted lens to view how programs for Black males at PWIs influence academic achievement, social experiences, well-being and the institution.

Social climate primarily describes a relationship between individuals and settings. Settings can affect how individuals develop (e.g. Black males) as well as how systems (e.g. programs at PWIs) operate. Moos (1987) argues that settings determine how interpersonal relations support individual growth and their focus on maintenance or changes in a setting influence positive experiences. Moos (2003, p. 1) defined social climate as:

the 'personality' of a setting or environment, such as a family, a workplace, a social or task-oriented group, or a classroom; like people, environments differ in how restrictive and controlling they are.

In this study, social climate refers to both interpersonal relationships that may develop for Black males in programs of support at PWIs, and how these interactions may influence their academic achievement and well-being as well as influence the institution.

**Moos’ Social Climate Dimensions.** Moos (1987; Kloos et al., 2012) provides three dimensions of social climate and how each one assists to understand individuals within settings: 1) relationships; 2) personal development; and 3) system maintenance and change. Relationships (Moos, 1987) focuses on how valuable the relationships are in a setting by determining how engaged, supportive, and trusting relationships are in a setting. For example, programs for Black males at PWIs (e.g. settings) assist with supporting academic achievement and well-being by providing positive interactions with administrators, faculty, and peers. The social climate of the programs influences the
students’ levels of academic and social engagement/involvement (Tinto 1975; 2010; Astin, 1999) as well as encourages the development of academic self-concept (Allen, 1992; Hurtado et al., 1998; Cokley, 2000; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). The program (e.g. setting) itself benefits by assisting the involved administrators and faculty to better understand ways to build upon and identify the programs’ structure, curricula, and practices that were designed to support the students’ achievement and well-being.

Personal development (Kloos, 2012; Moos, 1987) focuses on whether the growth, self-sufficiency, and the abilities of individuals are nurtured within a setting. In relation to this study, personal development may be a factor for programs at PWIs to foster an environment that provides opportunities for emotional growth among participants. Emotional growth may then enable Black males to succeed both inside and outside the classroom. System maintenance and change (Kloos et al., 2012; Moos, 1987) specifically looks at the “…order, clarity of rules and expectations, and control of behaviors,” (Kloos et al., 2012 p. 145) of a setting. For example, in this study, programmatic goals were examined to determine how they are clearly outlined to foster and assess a healthy academic and social environment that aid Black males’ achievement and well-being.

Moos developed ten scales which have been used to assess the social climate of various settings. Two of the scales, “The Classroom Environment Scale and the University Residence Scale,” (Moos, 2003) were created specifically to investigate the social climate of educational settings and have been useful with program development and evaluation. This study referred to these two scales to formulate interview guides which may reveal key factors of how programs may influence Black males’ academic achievement and well-being at PWIs and the institution.
**Astin’s Theory of Involvement.** Student involvement (e.g. engagement) has been noted as a significant indicator for successful academic (e.g. retention and graduation rates) and social (e.g. sense of belonging) outcomes for college students. Astin’s Theory of Involvement refers to, “… the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience;” it further, “…emphasizes active participation of the student in the learning process; focusing more on behavioral mechanisms or processes that facilitate student development—the “how” of student development,” (Astin, 1999, p.528; Evans et al., 2010). Based on existing literature, Black males’ student involvement is adversely affected in comparison to their peers. For instance, at PWIs often there are a limited number of student organizations/clubs that are specifically established for Black male students or lack significant numbers of Black men, other than Black Greek fraternities and specific sport teams (e.g. basketball and football). Astin (1993, p.398) suggested “…a student’s peer group is the most influential source on their growth and development during college.” For example, Harper and Quaye (2007), conducted a qualitative study that looked at student organizations as a space for Black males in college and the effect campus affiliations played regarding their identity as Black men. The study revealed that Black men engaged in student activities and campus leadership positions displayed more of a connection with their campus and empowered them to build a community and presence for their fellow Black peers; campus involvement also allowed for “cross-cultural,” collaborations with other students from different backgrounds. According to Tinto, (2010, p. 70):

> the more students are academically and socially engaged with other people on campus especially with faculty and student peers, the more likely (other things being equal) they will stay and graduate from college.
Programs of support for Black males on predominantly White campuses may be viewed as mechanisms toward transformative change, with goals to graduate, retain, and sustain their academic achievement and well-being. Therefore, the programs of support included in the proposed this study may have encouraged Black males to interact more comfortably with their peers, faculty, and campus-life experiences with student organizations, residential life programming, and opportunities for leadership.

For Black male students on predominately White campuses, racial self-identification may be fundamental for developing a sense of belonging, engaging in academic success, and engendering significant levels of student involvement, (Harper, 2007). According to Harper (2007), connecting to faculty and student groups from the same racial demographic allows for a clearer understanding of their self-concept, comfort on the campus, and their overall student development. The programs selected for this study, may provide more opportunities for Black males to interact with other Black males, faculty, mentors, thereby potentially increasing the benefit of program components designed to facilitate academic and personal growth.

This study utilized Moos’ Social Climate dimensions to frame how social climate of support programs promote the academic achievement and well-being of Black males at PWIs as well as how the student participants experience and comprehend how the program may influence their success. This study also employed Astin’s Theory of Involvement to frame the ways which programs for Black males on predominantly White campuses may influence their campus involvement/engagement. Lastly, these two theories were applied to understand how the programs may enhance campus relationships across the institution.
Chapter 3

Method

In this section, I will begin by discussing qualitative research and the rationale behind the methodology (i.e., case study) selected for this study. Then I will share my positionality as a researcher, followed by the research design of this study. Lastly, this chapter will provide an overview of the proposed procedure, data collection, analytic plan, and tests for trustworthiness. The following overarching research questions guided this study:

1. Why was the program created?
2. How are curricula or practices of the program utilized?
2b. How are outcomes measured in the program?
3. How does the program influence the participants?
3b. How does the program influence the institution?

Using semi-structured interview guides and analysis of program documents, I employed a multiple case study approach to understand how programs for Black males at PWIs influence students’ academic achievement and well-being, and the institution.

Qualitative Research

For many years, there has been a debate about the value of qualitative research as compared to quantitative. Qualitative research has been viewed as less rigorous in comparison to quantitative research across various disciplines. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated, the rigor associated with the current vast repertoire of data collection and analysis strategies indicate that qualitative research is substantial, eminent and in many cases a superior approach to empirical inquiry. In the social sciences, qualitative
methodology helps to elucidate the experiences of people and how systems function. This approach, therefore, fits with the field of Community Psychology (CP) in terms of an ecological perspective and understanding of “person-environment fit. One of the core concepts of CP is understanding context (Kloos, 2012), which is often related to work and learning environments being the focus of study and action.” Denzin and Lincoln described qualitative research as, “… a situated activity that locates the observer in the world,” (2015, p.10). By interpreting data from interviews, focus groups, observations, photographs, and field notes, qualitative research provides in-depth narratives regarding contextual experiences of individuals, thereby contributing to an understanding of the ecology. Qualitative research is subjective. While subjectivity has traditionally been considered a weakness, Creswell (2013, p.48) argues that “…you cannot separate what people say from the place where they say it.” The researcher is the mechanism attempting to understand the meaning of individual experiences, systems, or communities to address an issue (Patton, 2015). One’s background, lived experiences, capabilities, capacity for empathy, compassion for multiculturalism, engagement in research—these things all undergird the credibility of one’s findings. Reflecting on one’s personhood, context, values, worldview, and choice of study, are all embedded in qualitative methodology.

Patton (2015, p. 13) outlined seven contributions of qualitative inquiry: (1) illuminating meaning, (2) studying how things work, (3) capturing stories to understand peoples’ perspectives and experiences, (4) elucidating how system functions and their consequences for peoples’ lives, (5) understanding context: how and why it matters, (6) identifying unanticipated consequences, and (7) making comparisons to discover important patterns and themes across cases. Based on the aforementioned seven
contributions, first, this study attempts to elucidate the meaning of how programs for Black males at PWIs function and may influence the students’ experiences. Second, it endeavors to capture perspectives of program administrators and Black males at PWIs involved in programs aimed to support student successes. Third, the study provides understanding of how programs, such as micro-settings, matter and may influence the academic achievement and well-being of Black males as well as the institution. Lastly, this study will reveal common themes and differences of programs for Black males at PWIs.

Inquiring about various perspectives of program participants contributes to understanding how context may impact learning outcomes for students and for some institutions. According to Patton (2015, p. 8), “…qualitative inquiry makes attention to context a priority for both data collection and reporting findings, thus, documenting diversity and the contextual factors that explain particular variations even while identifying cross-cutting patterns and themes.” As suggested by McClain and Cokley (2017), Black males are exposed to and experience more psychosocial challenges that influence their racial identity, academic self-concept, emotional stress, and academic disidentification in comparison to other young men and women. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the context of programs for Black males at PWIs and how the programs may influence their academic achievement and well-being.

**Case study approach.** Creswell (2013) describes 5 dominant approaches to qualitative inquiry: narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. This study utilized a case study approach as specified by Stake (1995) and Creswell (2007). Case studies are commonly used in research pertaining to systems (e.g.
higher education programs) or services pertinent to people (Stake, 1995; 2005). Creswell (2007) described case study research as an investigation of a problem through one or several experiences within a setting. Stake (1995, p.2), argued that case studies are not methodologies but rather “bounded systems,” that are examined within specific boundaries (e.g. time and place). They are particularly useful when investigating unique programs (e.g. programs for Black males) in different settings (e.g. PWIs). Case studies can provide rich details about one or more programs being studied such as the structure, curriculum, and the context that are presented (Balbach, 1999). This rich, thick description of a case or cases assists in understanding these cases holistically.

Case studies can examine a single case or a collection of cases (i.e. multiple case study). According to Stake (1995), single case studies can either be defined as intrinsic or instrumental. Intrinsic case studies investigate a specific matter, select one situation about that issue, and provide a comprehensive explanation. Instrumental case studies are used to understand a problem (e.g. PWIs graduation and retention rates of Black males) and examine a case or cases (e.g. programs for Black males at PWIs) that assist to better understand the phenomena, (Creswell, 2013).

It is important to understand that this study is not a program evaluation. According to Patton, (2015, p. 5) a program evaluation “…involves studying how a program works and what results it gets render a judgment about its effectiveness.” This case study sought to construct meaning of programs for Black males on majority White campuses and understand how programs may influence their academic achievement and well-being as well as the institution.
Essential for exploratory case study research, thick description provides a detailed understanding of each cases’ similarities or themes that make each case different. According to Merriam (2002, p.29), “…providing rich, thick description is a major strategy to ensure generalizability in qualitative research.” Generalizability is generally defined as whether findings from one study can be applied to other situations (Creswell, 2007). Case study and other qualitative approaches are limited in terms of traditional conceptualization of generalizability. Thick, rich description, however, provides an alternative to the standard of rigor based on generalizability by instead seeking answers to the why and how of the structure and function of phenomena that cannot be captured by survey methods (Hammersley, 2008).

The strength of this work is the elucidation of the social processes that underlie students’ experiences in programs for Black males. This study highlights the various interactions and relationships (e.g. social processes) between individuals, campus departments and university offices, all of which contribute to the social climate of the campus. Moreover, the social processes within the ecology of college campuses are features of this case study methodology that may elucidate success within each setting and therefore are not generalizable but are instructive for how other settings may approach the question of how to facilitate student achievement.

**Researcher Positionality**

Exploring the experiences of Black males who attend predominantly White institutions (PWIs) can be a both sensitive and complex topic in nature. My professional experience of working with underrepresented populations at a PWI for 13 years has been the driving force behind my research interests. As a senior administrator, my current
research stance is informed by my previous attempts to better understand the experiences of Black men in a predominantly White university setting, and my approach to this study incorporates my professional experience and personal experience as an African American (AA)/Black person who attended a PWI.

Therefore, a constructivist approach served as the epistemological paradigm for the study, and an interpretivist perspective guided the methodology. Following a constructivist epistemology, knowledge is created by an interaction between a person/people and what is known; constructivism incorporates different perspectives based on the researcher’s own lived experiences (Glense, 2006; 2015). This approach allowed me to utilize my own perspectives/experiences as a lens for interpreting data and understanding how the program administrators’ and student participants’ perspectives influence academic achievement and well-being as well as the institution.

Although I have the same race in common with my population of interest, my race alone does not ensure any commonality because of numerous other aspects of my identity that intersect with it, such as my socioeconomic status and gender. I am aware that my experiences as a female college student were different from that of males. Therefore, my perspective as a researcher is influenced by my gender and position. For example, my decision making, my process for how to foster interpersonal relationships, the degree to which I bear societal stereotypes/stigmas, and the manner in which I cope with emotions are likely quite different from that of many Black men, particularly in a mostly White academic context. Although I could be considered an insider due to my race, and my own academic experience in settings similar to those I propose in this study,
I am not male; my role as an outsider by gender helped me to explore and understand another perspective.

My cultural capital and socio-economic status have also been an important aspect of my identity. My personal context of post-secondary education comes from my parents who were adamant that going to college was not a negotiable topic of discussion. However, even though I completed my bachelor’s and master’s degree and came from an upper-middle class family, I too faced financial challenges while attending a private predominantly White university. However, my challenges did not stop me from finding ways to pay for my education. Because of my social circle and strong connection with the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, I managed to develop relationships with a couple of Black administrators on campus. These relationships ended up being essential during the rest of my undergraduate career. These administrators made themselves available to me, a relationship which helped me to trust them and feel comfortable to talk with them about my situation. With their connections and counsel, I figured out how to fund my remaining semesters, cope with personal challenges, and developed relationships with other administrators who were present to support me. Once I gained my footing, I found myself going back to these two administrators more often for academic and personal advice and to maintain the rapport we had established. I felt like I had found people that were helpful to me and reminded me of what was expected of me. I became aware that I had resources outside of the classroom, people that did not have authority over my grades but who were in positions of leadership at the university and who provided me support. These supportive relationships helped me feel connected to campus and I shared them with my peers as additional resources.
My 13-year professional career in higher education was comprised of directing pipeline programs, recruiting prospective students, and directing an office specifically for underrepresented minority (URM) students. These professional experiences provided me skills to support and aid students on how to navigate a PWI. My diverse portfolio of experience working at a PWI seemed to always include work with groups of students who looked a lot like myself and my friends stemming from various backgrounds (e.g. ethnicity, socioeconomic, college preparedness, etc.). My last administrative role in higher education resonated with me the most. It entailed work that supported URM scholarship students’ undergraduate careers with services that ranged from academic, counseling, mentoring, programming, and post graduate preparation. However, even with the additional academic and personal support, advising, and mentoring, I began to see the Black male students continue to grapple with academic and personal issues.

Throughout the semesters, several of my male students met with me and shared personal issues that were interrupting their ability to focus on school. During the meetings, some would break down in tears or sit confused as to why they were not able to focus on school. Some instances were tied to personal issues occurring back home (e.g. parents’ divorce, expectations, etc.), but most seemed to be related to their own self-identity and how to connect socially by joining student organizations (e.g. clubs/organizations, fraternities). If the students were performing well academically, they were struggling psychosocially and vice versa; it seemed difficult for several of the Black males to find a balance, a situation which in turn influenced their academic achievement or their well-being. In some cases, the challenges began to influence their on-campus conduct.
More and more, the Black males were getting into disciplinary issues experimenting with drugs and alcohol to cope with stress, anxiety, and depression or their focus on their academics significantly declined. There were some success stories of students and some students who fell through the cracks but ultimately, these scenarios resonated with me personally and professionally. Subsequently, this led me to inquire more about what mechanisms of support Black males needed to be successful and how some institutional programs are successfully supporting this population’s undergraduate careers.

My past professional experience, skills, background, capacity to empathize, intuitive personality, and sensitivity to cultures has guided me toward my research of interest (Patton, 2015). Having worked with a program that significantly impacted URM scholarship students on a predominantly White campus, I witnessed how a program positively impacted student academically and socially. The success of the program enabled me to establish interpersonal relationships across departments with faculty and administration who in return provided access to additional resources and opportunities that enhanced the scholarship students’ undergraduate experiences, such as funding for books and providing research opportunities abroad. The resources and opportunities were critical in supporting institutional goals for retention and graduation of historically underrepresented students. Given my professional and personal background working with URM students, I had to utilize reflexive practice to hear participants’ narratives and intentionally amplify their voices rather than solely rely upon my own views as central throughout this study. As a constructivist researcher, however, I recognize that my reality is interdependent with the realities I sought to uncover in this study.
Research Design

In a qualitative study, the researcher must carefully determine who and/or what, where, and the size of the sample. Creswell (2013) defines this approach as purposeful sampling; purposeful sampling assists in identifying the type of sampling strategy that is most suitable and will help to better understand the research problem. Convenience sampling, “…saves time, money, and efforts but at the expense of the information and credibility; data is easily accessible,” (Creswell, 2013). For this study, purposeful sampling served as the overarching strategy with the constraints of convenience sampling in terms of accessibility. This strategy aided me to glean rich data about programs for Black males at select PWIs and the influence the programs have academically and psychosocially for the students, and on the institution. Primarily, qualitative research studies include small samples sizes in comparison to quantitative studies. In case study research, a small sample size is recommended to clearly identify commonalities and differences between cases (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). The participants in this study were selected based on distinct traits of the programs as they relate to the research questions.

Sample participants and setting. The sample for this study included 3 programs for Black males at 4-year, public, Division I, predominately White institutions (PWIs) located in the southeastern region of the United States (Table 1).
Table 1.

**Demographics of PWIS in this study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Demographics</th>
<th>Program 1</th>
<th>Program 2</th>
<th>Program 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome Measures</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Enrollment</td>
<td>13,134</td>
<td>29,376</td>
<td>34,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention Rate (1st to 2nd year)</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>94%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate (6-year)</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>79%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/ Alaska Native</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/ Hawaiian</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Unknown</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-resident alien</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Institutional data as of Fall 2017 retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics*

PWI is a term used often in higher education to describe colleges and universities where 40-50% or more of the student population is Caucasian/White students (Brown, Dancy, & Davis, 2013). The programs selected for this study included but were not limited to the following components: academic advising, mentoring, and workshops geared toward academic and social development. Within these programs, three program administrators (e.g. the director or assistant director from each site) were interviewed to better understand their roles, the programs’ curriculum or practices of the programs, and the influence the programs may have on program participants’ academic achievement and well-being as well as the impact of these programs may have on the institution. Additionally, nine student participants (e.g. three students from each program who self-
identified as Black and/or African American males) were interviewed to share their experiences while enrolled in a support program geared to their success on a predominantly White campus. The students purposefully recruited for this study were upperclassmen program participants (e.g. sophomore, juniors, and/or seniors) at the selected institutions. However, program participants who had completed their freshmen year were allowed to participate in the study to collect diverse experiences during their undergraduate education.

The sample of the students were from various academic disciplines, included in-state and out-of-state residents, and excluded students under the age of 18, student-athletes, and transfer students. Transfer students and student athletes were excluded for similar reasons. Transfer students typically have different orientation programs and additional student services specific to their needs that are provided by institutions to assist with their transition. Their experiences may have varied in comparison to students who entered these institutions as first year students. In addition, prior to commencing data collection a pilot study of the student interview questions was conducted with a small group of student athletes. The student athletes’ experiences and their different and limited kinds of interactions with other students and professors seemed to be associated with being a Black male student athlete which diverged considerably from other student groups including their Black male student peers.

**Procedure.** First, three programs that support Black male student achievement for this multiple case study were identified. The programs for this study met the following criteria: they were located at an institution that participates in NCAA Division I athletics, on a predominantly White campus, and with programs for Black males that have been
established to support academic outcomes (e.g. retention and graduation). I utilized various methods to identify the programs for this study. For example, I conducted an online search by entering keywords/phrases such as “programs for Black males at PWIs, diversity programs, academic achievement,” which generated a list of several institutions. I then narrowed the list down by specifying my geographical region of interest, the southern United States. Initially, I did not plan on focusing only on programs in the South, but I accounted for accessibility, proximity, and which would be the most cost effective for this study.

Programs for this study were identified as a result of snowball sampling. Patton (2015, p. 270) defines snowball sampling as when, “…a chain of interviewees based on people who know people, who know people, who would be good sources given the focus of inquiry. Once identified, the researcher does the recruiting.” For example, the first program [Program 1] of interest was brought to my attention through a former colleague at a university who is connected with an administrator at another university who works in a department that collaborates with a program for Black males. The second program [Program 2] was discovered by speaking with a former colleague who works at one of the universities I found during my online search. Lastly, the third program I chose to work with was discovered through my online search for diversity programs at one of the universities of interest. I found out that one of my former supervisors when I was a student assistant in college is a faculty member and administrator in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. From there, it was shared to me that this university also had a program for Black males and my former supervisor offered to put me in contact with the director of the program.
This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Even though this study included data collection from multiple sites, no additional steps were required for an external review from IRB. A consent form (Appendix D.) was created and provided to all student participants.

Initially, my contact with the third program of interest [Program 3] was consistent. I was invited to campus for a meeting to discuss the details of the study and answer additional questions with the program administrator. The administrator notified me that I had to submit my IRB approval for the study to their university Human Subjects Research Office (HSRO) and complete a document requesting permission to recruit students from their program. I submitted the required documentation immediately, however, the administrator I was working with had not renewed his CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) certification which is required from their HSRO to participate in any research. This significantly delayed my data collection process and I proceeded with another program from a different institution. After revisiting programs, I found online that I did not initially contact, I submitted an amendment to IRB that included alternate programs to consider. Once I received approval to proceed a with an alternate site from IRB, a colleague reached out to a senior level administrator at the third program’s university and put me in contact direct with the administrator from Program 3.

I developed a letter of interest (LOI) (Appendix A.) outlining the purpose of the study. The LOI was sent via email to each program administrator to gain access and request permission to conduct this study. A conference call followed to discuss any further details and answer any additional questions about the study. Once I confirmed the programs’ participation, I set up times and dates for interviews with each administrator.
The administrators who participated in the study, assisted me with the recruitment of student participants. I created a recruitment flyer (Appendix G.) to recruit three students from each program. The recruitment flyer included a link and/or a QR code that directed students to a brief pre-screening survey (Appendix H.) to be considered for the study. I created the pre-screening survey with Qualtrics, an online survey software which helps to collect and analyze survey responses. Next, I requested the flyer to be posted in the programs’ offices as well as sent out via email to students from the program administrator to ensure a higher response rate. As students responded, I exported the results into an Excel spreadsheet to track and verify responses as well as exclude any students who did not meet the inclusion criteria for this study.

Approximately 10-15 students from each program completed the pre-screening survey. I then contacted the students who met the inclusion criteria and who were first to respond. I emailed each respondent to schedule a time and date for the in-person or video chat interview. Once programs for this study confirmed their participation, I created a table (see Table 2) to help identify the programs and participants for this study.

Table 2.

Programs and Interview participant identifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program 1</th>
<th>Program 2</th>
<th>Program 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admin 1</td>
<td>Admin 2</td>
<td>Admin 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1.1</td>
<td>Student 1.2</td>
<td>Student 1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2.1</td>
<td>Student 2.2</td>
<td>Student 2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3.1</td>
<td>Student 3.2</td>
<td>Student 3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first number for each student indicates the order in which the student was interviewed in the column of the program listed. The second (decimal) number assigned to each student indicates the program in which the student participates.
All of the participants received an incentive for participating in the study. Students received a $25 Amazon gift card and administrators received a $15 Amazon gift card after I collected the consent forms and all of the interview responses.

**Data Collection.** The qualitative research methods utilized for this case study were semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Interpretive in nature, interviews aim to elicit the different perspectives and lived experiences of individuals in a setting. Fontana and Frey (2005, p. 696) argued:

“…the interview is not merely the neutral exchange of asking questions and getting answers. Two or more people are involved in this process, and their exchanges lead to the creation of a collaborative effort called the *interview*. The key here is the “active: nature of this process that leads to a contextually bound and mutually created story—the interview.”

Interviews are used in both qualitative and quantitative research but are particularly popular in case study research.

It is essential to establish trust with participants. Trust between the researcher and the participants allows for rich and authentic conversations with the students whose experiences may be influenced by the majority population and by the administrators who facilitate programs designed to support their academic achievement and well-being. In this study, I conducted interviews with the participants by asking questions and collecting responses which evolved as a mutually created story. As an active participant, I considered the impact my role may have on the process. I was careful to pay attention to any influence my own persona may have on the interview. For example, having directed programs that supported college students of color and now conducting research on
programs that promote their successes, I understood that if I was not careful, my past professional experience could influence my questions and the responses of the sample. I made a concerted effort to block out what I thought I already knew based on my past professional experience working with underrepresented (URM) students at a PWI (e.g. sensitizing concepts, Charmaz, 2012, p. 30) in order to reduce my influence on the outcome of the data.

The interviews in this study were comprised of open-ended questions that assisted in understanding how programs on predominantly White campuses may influence Black males’ academic achievement and well-being as well as the institution. One program administrator who is knowledgeable of the program history, curriculum and practices, with frequent interaction with the students was interviewed. Criteria for selected student participants included involvement with the program since freshman year. I audio taped recorded all of the interviews for this study.

Due to various circumstances, the student participants and administrator from Program 3 were unable to meet in person; those interviews were conducted via Google’s video chat and audio taped recorded. All of the interviews lasted about an hour to an hour and a half. The in-person interviews from the study were conducted in a conference room at Program 1 and Program 2. All of the participants in the study signed a consent form (Appendix D.) which outlines the purpose of the study, why they were selected to participate in the study, and confirmed that their privacy was protected.

Interview guides were developed and piloted for this study. Guides essentially assisted in the research process to efficiently collect interpretive data from the case, (Creswell, 2013). Pilot interviews aid the researcher to identify and frame questions that
elicit in-depth responses from participants, understand the research process, and evaluate the intention behind the questions being posed, (Glesne, 2015).

For this study, one interview guide (Appendix F.) was tested with two Black male alumni of a PWI that were past participants in an academic support program for underrepresented minority students. The second interview guide (Appendix E.) was piloted with a program director that directs a program for URM students at various PWIs. Responses from the piloted interviews helped to better frame some questions and develop new questions. The interview questions for this study aimed to reveal information that was closely related to the research questions.

Additionally, Moos’ Social University Residence Environment Scale (URES) assisted with the development of the questions. The URES has been primarily used in research that assesses environments to understand how the settings influence groups (Gerst and Moos, 1972; 1974); the URES questions are framed based on Moos’ three dimensions of social climate—relationships (e.g. interpersonal connections), personal development (e.g. academic achievement), and system maintenance and change (e.g. an institutional program). The final interview guides for this study were comprised of open-ended, semi-structured interview questions.

Document analysis was the second method employed for this study. Bowen (2009) described document analysis as a method of qualitative research in which specific documents are gathered by the researcher to “give voice and meaning” to a particular topic. Bowen (2009) outlines five functions of document analysis. First, documents provide historical information that may help identify reasons of why a specific problem exists. Second, information in documents may uncover other questions or situations that
need to be investigated. Third, documents supplement data collected from other sources such as semi-structured interviews. Fourth, documents help to detail any changes or developments within an existing organization/program (e.g. comparing drafts of an original document to a current version of a document). Fifth, document analysis plays an instrumental role in triangulation which reinforces the credibility of the data. This analysis yields emerging themes and constructs them into categories used for additional analysis, making it appropriate for case studies and grounded theory, (Bowen, 2009; O’Leary, 2014).

Document analysis is a cost-effective method of inquiry, however, it has some limitations. According to Bowen (2009) there are three main concerns of document analysis: (1) documents may provide insufficient data to answer research-based questions (2) documents may not be readily available or accessible, and (3) the documents provided may have been strategically made available to substantiate existing policies or agendas of an organization. Therefore, it is essential to closely evaluate biases of documents and the researcher in order to maintain the trustworthiness of the data.

Selecting documents for document analysis is rather straightforward. Bowen suggests selecting a variety of documents, but he emphasizes that the researcher must be sure to place more emphasis on the quality of the documents rather than quantity; documents should be evaluated for breadth and selectivity of the data (Bowen, 2009). According to Merriam (2002), “…the strength of documents as a data source lies with the fact that they already exist in the situation” (p. 13). Public documents may include blank in-take forms, program meeting agendas, websites, and/or flyers for program events. For this study, I analyzed the website homepages of each program which were easily
accessible and public documents that did not require permission for use. The homepages for the programs were examined to provide further description of how the programs operated, and the tools they used to measure specific learning outcomes. Furthermore, the documents (e.g. website homepages) selected for this study supplemented the participants’ interview responses (i.e. primary source of data) as themes emerge across three sets of data.

Analytic plan. This study is a multiple (collective) case study of three programs for Black males from different PWIs located in the southern region of the United States. The programs (cases) are described in detail to understand how the programs influence the academic achievement and well-being of this student population as well as the institution. The analysis for this study involved interpreting semi-structured interviews of program administrators, student participants of the program, and the homepage of each programs’ website, as documents. Collecting and analyzing this data assisted with interpreting meaning from thickly described data to draw upon intangible experiences and relationships that may occur as a result of facilitating (e.g. program administrators) and participating (e.g. student participants) in programs for Black males at PWIs.

My analytic plan for this study was inductive and driven by the data collected from the interviews and program documents. Patton (2015, p. 66) stated that, “…inductive analysis is built on a solid foundation of specific, concrete, and detailed observations, quotations, documents, and cases.” This analytic method developed by working from the statements or content in the data toward more abstract understandings of their meanings. As I constructed overarching groups/categories, and themes during the analysis of the data, I revisited the interview transcripts and documents and examined
emergent constructs, as far as possible, to elucidate what they meant working from the bottom up.

I personally transcribed the first two interviews of each case (e.g. one program administrator and one student). This strategy allowed me to develop a critique of myself, hone my interview skills for each case, note and correct any errors as I proceeded with my data collection. After I transcribed 6 of the interviews, I then paid for transcription service with Rev.com to complete the transcription for the remaining 6 interviews. I used ATLAS.ti, a qualitative management software program, to store, organize, and code the data. Creswell (2013, p. 203) describes how ATLAS.ti, “…program enables you to organize your text, graphic, audio, and visual data files, along with your coding, memos, and findings, into a project. Further you can code, annotate, and compare segments of information.” The data I collected was compared and analyzed across all cases (e.g. programs)— a “cross-case analysis.” (Creswell, 2013 p. 101). A cross-case analysis helped to present common themes and differences among the programs. The data collected from this study (e.g. interviews and documents) were evaluated simultaneously to see how the information aligns with the proposed theories.

The coding of data for this study occurred at three different levels. This analytic method of coding is typically employed in Grounded Theory (GT). This approach is also appropriate for this case study because it helped categorize and define the meaning of “first hand” data collected by making comparisons between the data as themes arise (Charmaz, 2014, p. 19; p. 111). Constant comparison is the language used by Grounded Theorists such as Glaser and Strauss (2017), Charmaz (2014), and Corbin and Strauss (2015), which explains how to conduct coding, set up codes, and make comparisons
across open codes to see how to condense them. Constant comparison helps to explain how to navigate through the data as coding takes place; constantly comparing at all levels (e.g. open codes, groups/families, themes, and core categories).

In this study, excerpts from interview responses and program documents from each case were analyzed to identify themes. Level 1 analysis also known as “open coding,” entailed line-by-line coding of the interview transcripts. Harry and Klinger (2006, p. 207) emphasize “…initial, “open,” coding, because it is not determined by a preconceived category, is concrete, reflecting the actual action observed.” The open coding process assisted to create groups/families from the data. The next step was Level 2 coding which is also known as focused coding. Level 2 analysis (i.e. focused coding) “…imputes meaning to the behavior,” (Harry and Klinger, 2006, p. 208). As an emergent process, focused coding demands intense participation of the researcher with the data; closely examining major and recurrent codes that surfaced initially (Charmaz, 2014). Level 2 entails the clustering of codes to create conceptual categories (e.g. families or groups).

In addition, I engaged in memoing throughout the coding and data analysis process. Corbin and Strauss (2015) describe memoing as a reflective process of recording ideas and thoughts from the data throughout the entire process. The memos helped to define the groups/families. After the connections between the groups/families were analyzed, Level 3 (i.e. thematic level) coding occurred revealing three themes: 

*developing meaningful relationships, building a sense of community, and networks of support.* These three themes lead me to uncover the core category for this study— “developing community relationships.” The core category represents the key meaning in
the data (Charmaz, 2014). Once interview responses were coded for this study, I looked for corroborating evidence in the documents to validate and cross-check content for common themes. The evidence was then organized into what is “related to central questions of the research” (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). Lastly, I created a data analysis map that can be found in Chapter 4 (see Figure 1.) that illustrates the cross case-analysis process and provides the groups/categories and themes which emerged from the analysis.

**Test for trustworthiness.** To ensure the reliability of qualitative research, testing for trustworthiness is critical to warrant the quality of the criteria. The four constructs utilized to test for trustworthiness are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).

Credibility, “…argued as one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness,” by Lincoln and Guba, (Shenton, 2004, p.64) was established through triangulation. To eliminate bias and increase the reliability of data in qualitative research, triangulation is employed, (Denzin,1978). Triangulation is the employment of various data sources to test for credibility by comparing and possibly corroborating any common themes in a study (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Bowen, 2009). The multiple sources that were tested for trustworthiness through triangulation in this study were semi-structured interview responses of the from program administrators and student participants and the website homepages of all three programs. Along with the triangulation of data, themes that developed across all cases (e.g. programs) were examined.

Transferability was be achieved by “…rich, thick description,” of the settings, programs, and perspectives that were collected for this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Creswell, 2013, p. 252). For example, the semi-structured interviews of
participants were transcribed which may assist other researchers determine if the data collected is transferable to other settings based on mutual characteristics. Dependability was employed by the use of “overlapping methods,” (Shenton, 2004, p. 73) to ensure the quality of the data collection process. For example, there were interview guides with the same questions used for the program administrators and another guide used for the student participants of the sample. The use of memos also assisted with organizing thoughts and note connections which emerged throughout the process. Additionally, an in-depth description of the methodology for this study has been provided for future researchers to replicate. Lastly, confirmability is necessary to maintain and secure data for the purpose of confirming accuracy should an audit be required, (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was achieved by triangulation to “reduce effect of investigator’s bias,” (Shenton, 2004, p. 73) and examine the themes that may have transpired in connection to the data sources of the sample (e.g. program administrators, student participants, and program documents).

Interview guides were developed with semi-structured interview questions for the program administrators and the student participants. For example, the program administrator interview guide (Appendix E.) is comprised of the same questions for each case (e.g. program) and the same was applied for the student participants with questions pertaining to their lived-experiences in a support program at a PWI. Two tables were created to store and organize data collected from the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994). One table is comprised of the meanings of the groups/families as defined by the participants (Table 3.). The next table (Table 4.) includes a comparison of the programs’
documents (e.g. homepage websites of the programs) to assist with the cross-case analysis and common themes that evolved from the student interviews.
Chapter 4

Results

In this chapter, data analyzed from each of the programs are reported following four steps previously outlined by Yin (1999), whereby the researcher duplicates methods (e.g. interviews and document analysis) that help to better understand and compare each program. First, I will use rich, thick description to clearly define and describe each case (e.g. program) as my unit of analysis. Second, I will highlight some patterns of each program resulting in a set of groups/families that emerged during the level 2 coding process. Third, I will define the themes that developed across all three cases (cross-case analysis) and illustrate the commonalities and differences that may have emerged from the data (Patton, 1990). Lastly, my final step will highlight on what the cases revealed as the core category (developing community relationships) and provide a summary which Creswell (2013, p.101) shared as Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as “lessons learned from the case.”

Thick description

Thick description has a significant function in qualitative research, specifically in case study research. The process of thick description was first presented in qualitative research by Clifford Geertz, a well-known anthropologist. According to Geertz (2008), thick description must be based on facts, observations, and clarifications which emerge from the data. As an interpretive approach, thick description is extensive, detailed background information about the cases (e.g. programs for Black males) that helps the researcher understand meaning from the data (e.g. interview responses and document analysis) (Hammersley, M, 2008). Relevant for case study research, thick description provides an
in depth understanding of the commonalities or themes that make each case distinct (Dawson, 2010). The following section of this chapter begins with the utilization of data to provide a thick description of Programs 1, 2, and 3 with regard to the research questions of the study.

**Program 1**

**Program setting.** The first program (Program 1) for this study is at a public, research institution located in Alabama. The university opened its doors in the mid-late 1960s and has a wide-variety of majors for students to select from but primarily is known for excelling in the STEM (Science Technology Engineering, and Math) fields/disciplines. This PWI established a program for Black males to provide a pathway to navigate their undergraduate experiences and to offer opportunities to connect with Black male peers.

The first interview for this program was the director [Admin 1] who also serves as department director, for programs that support various multicultural and diversity programs for students (e.g. LGBTQ, international, Black, etc.), and that advocate for developing student leaders, mentors, and agents of social change. Program 1, along with its peer programs, resides in a newly renovated student union facility and is centrally located on campus. Like most college campuses, the student union appeared to be a popular space where students were casually convening, studying, eating, and working in some capacity as a part of the student center and its various programs. My early arrival at the first interview site allowed me time to peruse the space and speak with Admin 1 as he guided me to where I would set up for my interviews for the day.
History. As we began our interview, Admin 1 provided me with some history about the program and how it came to fruition. The program started sometime around 2006 or 2007. A group of Black undergraduates approached a Black senior administrator at the institution expressing concerns for their peers and the diminishing presence of Black men on campus: “…hey, you know, as Black men we aren't doing well. A lot of my friends are leaving, uh, things just aren't going well, uh, for our students.” During this time at the university, according to Admin 1, the estimated retention rate for Black male students on the campus was at 25-30%. These concerns and alarming statistics led the administrator to take a closer look as what was going on with the Black men on the campus.

A small group comprised of Black faculty and the senior administrator responsible for campus diversity worked collaboratively to assess the university’s problem retaining Black men. They brought in a well-known researcher whose scholarship focuses on Black males’ in higher education. As described by Admin 1, the overall conclusion of the researcher was, “…we [the university] aren’t doing a good job of retaining Black men on our campus…and I think that’s what really helped to get the ball rolling on trying to conceptualize the program.” A team was formed. The administrator the students first approached, along with an administrator who was initially approached and two colleagues with expertise in working with underrepresented students, developed a peer mentoring program. By 2007, this peer mentoring program evolved into Program 1. The program started with a cohort of approximately 20 students. Over the next two years, the program obtained university financial support to expand and increase the number of participants to 85. Admin 1 was unable to provide specifics of the dollar
amount and how the funds were used for toward the program. Program 1’s numbers have fluctuated over time. When the program was receiving the financial support to begin operations, it averaged approximately 88 participants per year. Today, Program 1 is averaging between 45-50 participants. This smaller population of participants allows the program to function more efficiently, specifically to have enough mentors for students that desire one during their time in the program.

**Description of program.** As the program grew, the next step was providing a full-time staff member who was added to coordinate program efforts and manage the peer mentors and mentees. Admin 1 was hired in 2010 as the coordinator of the program to not only oversee programming for the students but also to support efforts to retain and graduate program participants. After three years in the role of the coordinator, Admin 1 was promoted to the role of director for the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs. As director, he was able to expose the participants to a breadth of resources such as inclusivity training for students, guest speakers, and a mentoring network. As the director, Admin 1 has access to a variety of resources, which contribute to the reach of the program as far as developing on and off campus partnerships, which enhance experiences for Program 1 participants:

“...**Uh, in our program. We [the program] try to make it, worth their while and provide, you know, as many opportunities for them as we can. Um, we have, we've always had program- programming outside, um, of the course, uh, that is focused on, um, really identifying what are the unique needs for students to be successful. Uh, so you know, we do things like financial aid, um, we've done, we've done a workshop on, um, what to wear in various settings. We've partnered with Saks Fifth Avenue to do that for the past few years. Um, amazingly they've been really good partners. Um, and they [Saks Fifth Avenue] would invite the students out to the, out to their store. They would invite us to talk with them about what's, you know, what sort of attire they should wear in various settings, and even giving them good advice about where they can get affordable**
Admin 1 continuously contacts various departments for resources which help him to create experiences for the participants they may not have access to if they were not involved with Program 1.

Staff support is essential for the functionality and success of the program. Admin 1 supervises and works with three full-time staff members as well as three interns that work with the various student diversity units within the department. One coordinator specifically works closely with Program 1. A Black woman primarily coordinates the mentoring component of Program 1. Her role also entails supporting the Program 1’s various events (e.g. workshops, retreats, seminar(s), etc.) recruiting mentors, and providing support for the university’s international students. The other two coordinators work under separate units within the department; one unit promotes and advocates events and dialogue for gender and sexuality topics and the other unit is the educational arm of the department, which works with peer educators. The interns’ roles in the department change throughout the semester but include working with multicultural initiatives (e.g. Program 1), implementing retreats, training/educational programming, developing curriculum for seminar(s), as well as supporting efforts with a mentoring program for the international students.

According to Admin 1, the coordinator’s responsibilities involve regular interactions with students to monitor their academic progress, track mentor/mentee responsibilities, and implement programming. During the interview, Admin 1 elaborated on the extent her gender has had influence on the students in the program:
“…students are in our office hanging out all the time…they talk to her more than they talk to me. I’m a little jealous (laughs). Um, but part of it is, part of it is her relationship with them, as the coordinator. And really being present at all of the programs…if there is a program, she is there. You know, she’s facilitating or helping empower them to do those programs and activities. And so, they have, a great relationship with her. Uh, also, I think um, I have to say this because it; really interesting when we talk about these programs, that often we try to get men, just get all these men together, and just you know, we figure it out as men. But I think she, being a woman and also, making that very clear to them, in regard to what her interactions with them is gonna look like, has been important for our program. Um, because, you know, sometimes men give bad advice...(laughs) Um, they give terrible advice. I mean, we’ve invited men, like, “let me talk to your guys,” and it’s bad. And it’s rooted in all this hypermasculinity narrative, and you know, um, all kinds of stuff that’s harmful. Um, and so, um, having her there too, I mean even addresses issues, their relationships with women, So, you know one thing that we say is, um, students have a really bad habit of saying female. And so, her being able to hold them accountable on using that language. Um, has really helped them think about their relationships with women a lot differently.” (Admin 1)

The coordinator’s levels of interaction with the students appears to be evidence of relationship building that takes places within the program. Her influence on the participants in the program could impact relationships with other women they interact with socially, professionally, and possibly emotionally.

**Program practices.** After gathering a clear understanding of Program 1’s structure, Admin 1 walked me through the practices of the program, emphasizing mentoring as a core tenet of the program:

“…before we had anything, we had peer mentoring. Um, and so what we do, is we try to recruit high achieving students, uh, to serve as peer mentors, or develop students within their freshman year to, to go on and service peer mentors their sophomore year, and beyond. Uh, so peer mentoring is a really big piece to what we do.” (Admin 1)

Promoted as a peer mentoring program for Black males, Program 1, provides students with educational training that aids in their development as a mentors and leaders in the
Black community, on and off campus. Students interested in becoming a mentor submit an application. Mentors and mentees are typically paired by looking at three main areas: academic major, hometown, and personal interests/hobbies. Once students are paired up, they are not required to stay with their initial mentor or mentee, but typically do; it all depends on how well the relationship develops over time. All students selected to be mentors are required to attend training (e.g. FERPA, mentoring, etc.) and are expected to work closely with their mentees:

“...Um, all of our students who are mentors, uh, will go in and be provided education, particularly around, um, power, privilege, and oppression. Um, they'll do a safe zone training, and our mentors, uh, participate in, in all of those initiatives.” (Admin 1)

Mentors are required to keep monthly contact logs of when and how they interact with their mentees and communicate at least once a week via text, phone, email, and/or Snapchat. One in-person meeting at least once a month is required. The contact logs document updates on their mentees’ academic progress, opportunities they may want to explore (e.g. internships, resources, research, etc.), their adjustment to campus, and/or any issues/concerns they may be experiencing (e.g. academic, personal/social, etc.). The mentors share these contact logs monthly with Program 1’s administrators (Admin 1 and the coordinator); the logs help to track and monitor program participants’ experiences inside and outside the program. The monthly meetings help to make note of any red flag areas of concern, such as students’ academic challenges (e.g. needing a tutor or not enjoying their major), and over-all well-being (e.g. home sickness or isolation). Keeping track of this information provides the administrators insight on what types of programming/workshops and resources may be helpful to the participants. Program 1 prides itself on being a needs-base program in that students’ needs drive the ideas behind
the majority of programming. The students are heavily involved with the facilitation of events/programming, providing the opportunity to lead in the execution of a program from start to finish.

Being a mentor in Program 1 has had influence on some of the students’ confidence and has encouraged them to explore other on-campus leadership opportunities such as becoming a resident assistant, a university ambassador, and an executive board member of student organizations outside of the Black student affiliated organizations (e.g. Black Student Union and/or Black Greek letter organizations). The mentees of the program typically apply to become mentors. The students interviewed for this study reported a strong commitment to the peer mentoring culture and founding principles of the program. They stated that the mentor-mentee relationships not only make them feel as though they are not only giving back to one another, but also feeling empowered to stand for the greater good for Black males’ academic achievement and well-being in the university society. They describe their passion for mentoring one another as extending to other opportunities they may want to explore, such as various leadership roles, research, and opportunities in their hometowns.

Another significant component of Program 1 is a course that takes place in the fall semester. Program 1 worked with the school of education to develop the course. The course took on a different frame than the typical First Year Experience (FYE) course offered on campus; feedback from the students in the program helped Admin 1 collaborate with a professor to craft the course to be more specific to Black men. The course has evolved to include more unique needs for Program 1 participants:

“…Um, in 2010 a course was created, um, and we were able to bring on a program director from the school of education, uh, who sort of research,
and experience, uh [pauses] his course was really designed around, um, making students aware of, you know, um, sort of the perils and the issues affecting Black men within higher education. Um, and, um, we've since, you know, shifted the program a few times in terms of what that course looks like. Um, we focus on hard academic skill building. Um, and so we started focusing on positive, uh, Black male identity development within the course. And so, you know, the course focuses on things like masculinity ... uh, really affirming, um, who they are as Black men, and really talking about the complexity of the Black male experience, and how Black men are a monolith. Um, and it's taught by a professor, um from the African American Studies program.”

The course serves as a space the students gather in a classroom setting where they can have dialogue about who they are as Black men and can address hypermasculinity, which appears to be a main point of focus from Admin 1’s observations with Black males on campus:

“...I think ... and I have no, I have no data to support this as well. Um, I think ... for Black men at [university name], um the biggest issue affecting Black men is, um, the presence of hyper-masculine culture and how they, how they either embody that, in a lot of ways, or our students who don’t embody that get alienated. So, what I mean is, we'll have students that come in who, again, bought into this narrative around, you know, um, Black men should behave and act a certain way that is not gonna work in higher education. You know, they may be brilliant people, brilliant students, but because they, they really value that culture, it keeps them from wanting to engage in, you know, sort of intellectual activities. Um, you know, their relationships with, uh, their peers. Um, it just affects everything. I mentioned the students involved in disciplinary, uh, situations. Like, all that stems from, uh, a lot of the, a lot of the hyper-masculine culture that we try to deprogram them from. What I mean is, like their engagement in the intellectual environment that colleges provide. Like, those students who are interested in that have to combat, really the narrative or their peers who are telling them, “That's not cool.” Um, you know, we’ve, we’ve done everything academically that we think or have the power to do. But one thing that I think, um, that we struggle to address is really, um, comprehensive programming and engagement around Black male identity throughout their time in college. So, after they join a fraternity. Uh, after, uh, they enter a relationship. If they, if they are a gay man and are trying to navigate coming out. Or, uh, being accepted by their peers. It's things we try to be very intentional about, but we're not there all the time. Um, I would say that is, uh, the biggest, the biggest
challenge facing a Black man is really combating that hyper-masculine culture that, um, society often tells them that need to buy in."

By incorporating areas of concern for Black males in higher education (e.g. hypermasculine narrative) into the program, Admin 1 stated that the research helps him broaden the scope of the program outside of just increasing graduation and retention rates for the institution. He further asserted that by tapping into the deeper identity issues that participants of the program are facing as Black males in society, the program is supporting how programs for Black males on predominantly White campuses are supporting the students’ overall development, not just their academic achievement.

The academic support and resources provided to participants is an evident component of Program 1. Collaborating with various campus departments and faculty has become a programmatic norm. In conjunction with coordinating study groups, tutoring sessions, and tracking academic progress throughout semesters, Program 1 partners with other departments to cultivate an early arrival program that introduces the participants to essential academic resources and preparation:

“... there’s actually a lot of support for [name of Program 1] on our campus. Um, the Academic Success Center is a big partner for us, they also provide support for the entire campus. The English department does English enrichment for us. I mean, they do three sessions during Enrichment Week [name of early arrival program]. Um, the Chair for Freshmen English comes and and does that Um, the Math Department will do Math enrichment. So, they’ll go to the Math Lab.” Um, it [early arrival program] has been an important piece for us as students are able to come to campus early and get acclimated, and not have to find things, or figure out, you know, what, what’s happening on campus. They’re already pretty plugged in. (Admin 1)

The early arrival program allows students to move in a week before the semester begins and includes parent sessions to educate family members about the resources Program 1 provides to nurture and support academic and social experiences. Students are required
to spend at least three hours a week in the Academic Success Center as a requirement of
the First Year Experience (FYE) course. Admin 1 shared that the course is another way
the students stay connected with the program an academic level. The course includes key
areas of the program’s focus such as Black male identity and academic resources.

Admin 1 reported that supporting the program’s participants academically is a
primary goal. However, creating experiences that support their social experiences while
at the university, is another way the program aims to contribute to their overall
experience as Black males at the university. The social component of Program 1 includes
a variety off campus get togethers such as bowling, playing flag football, and going to the
movies as a group or with their mentees on their own. Students in the program socialize
with one another regularly even if it is not an organized event or outing. For example,
the office space of Program 1 tends to be a regular hang out spot between classes and
after hours. Admin 1 stated the office is a space the students frequent and call “their
own;” whether it’s having scheduled meetings or just meeting up to chat and eat together:
“…it’s a place that participants consider a second home.” Admin 1 promotes different
types of activities such as game nights or a campus-wide service project (e.g. Ghandi Day
of Service) that may be looking for students to participate as a way to encourage getting
Black males involved and in social settings: “…making sure that we've got all the Black
men that, um, are coming to campus to be involved...The social piece is really us getting
together and, um, building community.” Program 1’s intention is to utilize these social
opportunities to build a sense of community within the program but to also encourage the
students to feel that they are a part of the campus and should enjoy their college
experience academically and socially. At the end of the semester, Program 1 hosts a gala
for the students, where select graduating seniors who have excelled academically and
who have been successful on-campus student leaders are recognized amongst their peers,
campus departments, and community partners who have been avid supporters of the
program. During the gala, which has a theme honoring brotherhood, the young men
being honored receive a jacket which signifies excellence. Admin 1 stated: “...an event
such as this, brings the students together at a formal, yet social level with their peers to
celebrate their accomplishments as a community who encourage one another and strive
for excellence.” (Admin 1). In these spaces of socializing and bonding, the students may
be building relationships that provide one another with a sense of belonging, trust, and
community. Admin 1 reflected on a leadership retreat that spoke volumes of how
impactful these activities are for these young men:

“One of the greatest moments that I've had working with the program,
we take the students to our students to a leadership retreat and our
students were having their meeting. And one of our students, um, who is,
from rural Alabama, uh, is an openly gay man, uh, and was facing
some really serious health issues, um, he asked me could he share with the
group what he was going, what he was dealing with. And he did, And, you
know, [program coordinator’s name] and I didn't have to do or say
anything. They circled up around him, embraced him. Um, prayed for
him. Um, and seeing that community being built in that moment. Uh, was
a really powerful thing that I can't really quantify. Cause even, I was part
of fraternity as an undergrad and that'd never happen. You know like,
that moment never happen. Uh, so, you know, to see Black men building
community on our campus, is a, is a, unintended thing. That has
happened with the program that I think is so important. So Black men
know each other on our campus. It's not that, you know, they're just here.
They see each other, give each other the head nod. Like, they know each
other.” (Admin 1)

The social activities for the participants serve to bring the students together outside of a
classroom environment but also are serving as spaces to have fun, recognize excellence,
and share life experiences that they may be facing. It appears that Program 1’s planned,
or unplanned activities are providing participants with a nurturing environment that supports not only their academic achievements but also their well-being.

**Program participants.** Learning about Program 1 from Admin 1 provided a detailed understanding about the program and the various ways it may serve its participants. However, the interviews I conducted with three students from the program, provided insight into their experiences as participants in the program and as a Black male at this PWI. The first student I interviewed had just completed his freshman year. He discovered the program through a GroupMe chat that some mentors in the program joined to connect with new students at the university:

“... Lead mentors had came in there [the GroupMe chat session] and they were like, um, well, if you wanna get like a headstart on, um, knowing what the campus looks like. And what's expected of some of the scholarships they offer. You should join the [name of Program 1].” Because like, um, not a lot of people have friends and stuff when they come to a different environment and college is a big step from staying at home. So, you just wanna have somebody that you know and somebody that's looking out for you on campus.” (Student 1.1)

Student 1.1’s introduction to Program 1 was welcoming but also surprising. Growing up in a rural town in Alabama, his high school experience drastically changed after rezoning occurred. He went from a predominantly Black high school to a predominantly White high school in his junior year. When he arrived on campus and met some mentors from Program 1, it was a bit of a shocker:

“...coming to college it was just like, "Wow." Like all of these people like, they're all in leadership and like NPHC [National Pan-Hellenic Council] and stuff. And like sitting on, um, SGA [Student Government Association] panels and whatnot. So, it was just different. Um, it was something that I was used to but, uh, I haven't seen it in a while. So, it was just like, it had it, I did have to get a little bit used to it because back home, you're used to, um, just White people being at the head of things. Um, so like seeing a Black class president of the campus. So, it was just something different.” (Student 1.1)
The mentors he interacted with were one reason he joined, and the other reason was because of the program’s free early arrival component. Aside from it being free, Student 1.1’s interest in joining the program went deeper:

“...So, um, but really, I'm just all for like Black scholarship 'cause being on a PWI campus, we're already seen as like the, um, the underdogs. So, they're really like promoting us to be at the head of the classroom. And really stand out in the community, so others could join also when they come to campus.” (Student 1.1)

An early introduction to mentors from Program 1 and campus resources in the early arrival program, set a positive tone for Student 1.1’s experience at the university.

Reflecting on the early-arrival program, he was able to interact and connect with mentors from Program 1 and learn about essential resources that would aid in his academic and social adjustment to campus. The early-arrival program made him feel welcome, prepared, and well-connected to his fellow Black peers and to campus.

As a Black male in a predominantly White major (criminal justice) at a predominantly White institution, Student 1.1 actively sought out opportunities to join Black affiliated student organizations outside of becoming a participant in Program 1:

“...I got involved in the [name of Black student organization], and they throw a lot of, um, um, social events during the year that are like geared towards engaging Black people on campus. And, um, they throw like homecoming events. Um, they just threw a barbecue last Friday. Um, it's just really engaging the community and stuff. I guess it's just like, um, like on a campus that doesn't really have like your color whatever, there's always community out there. You just have to go look for it. And it's not really hard to find because like when I first got here, I didn't really know it, but I guess when I just happened to just walk into one of the meetings, they [other Black students] were just all there. And they were like, "hey, we're gonna be throwing a party on Friday if you wanna come by." But yeah, it's just like a sense of community. But yea, it's like no matter how White the campus may seem-it's just like, they [Black peers] give you a sense of home a little bit.” (Student 1.1)
While still expressing interest to join other clubs that do not have a Black majority student population next year (e.g. the mock trial team and criminal justice society), being involved with Program 1 and other Black student clubs on campus provide settings that keep him connected with his Black peers and involved in a student life experience that is reminiscent of home for him. Although Student 1.1 has experienced moments where he sensed racial bias, specifically from White students, he stated: “... like you just may walk by and you may get a different look than when you walk past someone with your color.”

Navigating a majority of White spaces on campus has posed its challenges, but Student 1.1 has managed to seek out opportunities where he can find a Black community to connect with outside of the classroom. The Black student experiences he shared from Program 1 and other organizations serve as reminders that he has communities he is a part of regardless of how small in number Black students and faculty are on campus, especially Black males.

Several relationships have come out of participating in Program 1 for Student 1.1. Making friends in the program with other Black males who are striving to succeed has been beneficial to his adjustment to the campus. Student 1.1. openly shared that without the program his experience would have been lonely:

“...Um, well I wouldn’t have a lot of the friends. I can say that I have friends now. If this program didn’t exist, um I would be a recluse and just be in my room all the time. It’s just really like opens you to like a lot of opportunities and stuff. Um, I guess this program really forces you to come out of your shell and really open up and be more talkative and state your opinion and stuff.” (Student 1.1)

Relationships with his peers and mentor in the program have not only encouraged him to explore his academic interests but also find his voice to better process what he thinks, how he feels, and express his opinion in predominantly White spaces. For example, when
he is the one of few or the only Black male in a class and is faced with having to be the
voice for Black America. By being a participant in Program 1, Student 1.1. has been able
to participate in dialogues geared various topics such as race, mental health in the Black
community, and gender equality. Student 1.1 shared how he appreciated being able to
process his emotions and state his opinions in a comfortable setting among his Black
male peers, and then carry those clear thoughts and opinions into his classroom
experiences with a majority of White peers and faculty.

Another relationship that has aided in his experience in Program 1 is the one he
occasionally mentioned throughout the interview with the program coordinator. Similar
to what Admin 1 shared, the participants in the program look to her (the coordinator) for
advice and understands that she has their best interest at heart. According to Student 1.1,
there seems to be a clear understanding of her role and a level of comfort that is shared:

“...we have our serious moments like when we talk about school and, um,
we talk about like voting and stuff with Black males. So, um, yeah,
[coordinator’s name], you know, she's, she has her fun moments but when
she wants to be serious, (laughs) she'll let you know that she's being
serious. Um, like when we're talking about school and grades and stuff.
And the graduation rate and retention rate, she's really like, she don't play
about that. So, I guess [coordinator’s name] like really just trying to
advocate for us to, um, really set the example and watch your
surroundings and stuff. And I guess know who your friends are, um, and
not get in the wrong crowd.” (Student 1.1)

Having the presence and influence of a Black female in the coordinator position has been
providing Student 1.1 and his peers with another person outside of one another to watch
out and care for the young men in ways that go beyond the Program 1’s core principles.
Life skills of being aware of who they are as young Black males on a predominantly
White campus but also as Black males in society is reinforcing the importance of valuing
a good education and learning how to conduct themselves with their female counterparts.
Student 2.1’s experience had some similarities with Student 1.1 however, as a junior and mentor in the program his perspective provided a broader glimpse of his experience in the program and at a PWI. Originally from D.C., Student 2.1 would not describe himself as a social butterfly during his freshman year. He did not mind making friends or having a lot of friends, instead he focused on his studies and was a mentee in Program 1. Student 2.1 became a mentor in the program his sophomore year. He branched out by joining some student organizations where he made some new friends and socialized a bit more. Toward the end of his sophomore year he applied to become a resident assistant (RA) and is currently fulfilling that role in his junior year. His transition socially to campus as an out of state student was slow to progress but even though he has managed to connect in different ways by way of Program 1, student organizations and his job as an RA, there still is an apparent disconnect with his peers in his classes:

“Come, coming from out of state, you don't know anybody so it's kind of hard to branch out. That's why [Program 1] really helped me with meeting new people. And like in classes, I would meet like one or two people. And then for me, like in my junior year class, I'm the only Black male in my whole engineering core for my class. So, it's kind of hard to branch out and talk to the, the White people because it's like, they're all, they're kind of cliquee too. And like you can kind of, I don't know, I wouldn't say, they kind of look at you a certain way. I don't know if it's like they mean to do it or it's just how it is. But it's just like you can tell that it's like they look at you a certain way ’cause your Black. ’Cause it's like in my class it's, I'm the only Black male and there's four Black females. And there's about 40, 45 maybe 50 of us in our whole class. It's like you ask, like, okay so I have a friend, she ... like they'll ask a question, and you do it, and you show 'em the answer. And, but they don't believe you, so they'll ask somebody else that, they, 'cause they'll be like oh. Basically, you got the same exact answer that somebody else got. So, it's kind of like that. But, it's just, I don't know. It's like you kind of got acclimated to it and just do what you can. You just, you get acclimated to it, you just got to adjust anyway you can. That's another thing with
[Program 1] helped. Because I found other Black males who were going through the same thing as me.” (Student 2.1)

The limited number of Black students in his junior year core classes seem to encounter similar experiences with their White peers. Although, Program 1 has provided the opportunity to connect and forge relationships with other Black males, there is a sense of isolation when attempting to interact with White students in his classes. The awkward classroom environment has not prevented him doing well academically. Sharing what he has experienced in his classes with his fellow mentees and mentor in Program 1 allows him the space to process and understand that this is the norm for him and for other Black males.

Program 1 has served as a safe space for Student 2.1 in several ways. He believes it has been a major support for his overall success as a Black male at a PWI. Outside of the race-related experiences he has encountered, he recalled two specific accounts of when he was grateful for the emotional support and resources, he has found in Program 1. One instance was a panel that Program 1 hosted about mental health in the Black male community. The event included a panel of Black male therapists and psychiatrists brought together to discuss why mental health is important and ways on understanding what self-care may look like for individuals. Additionally, the panel interacted with the students on why it’s necessary to have someone to talk to about issues they may be facing and how everyone has some kind of challenge they may be trying to ignore or navigate. Student 2.1 shared, “…like men feel like they’re too tough, and they don’t have to talk about anything,” as something he knows is prevalent in the Black male community. Attending this panel reinforced his belief that it’s important to check on your friends and that your friends check on you to support one another, especially in predominantly White
spaces. This panel is another way Program 1 is intentional with the type of programs they provide the students. By addressing and embedding negating a hypermasculine perspective in the Black male community with their students, the students may be unlearning what a culture and society expects from them as a community.

The other moment Student 2.1 recalled was the 2017 election of the 45th president of the United States of America. The day after the election, a deafening silence permeated the campus and contributed participants in Program 1 unpacking their emotions together:

“The biggest thing I remember really brought us [Program 1 students] together to process our emotions, was when Trump was elected. That was probably the saddest day the next day I’ve ever seen and like on campus. Like campus was just dead. And I went to the office, everybody was just silent, and they were just, just felt crushed. So, it’s like we, we had dialogue, we talked about like, it’s not, I feel like not as much as we should or we need to, but it brought up just like what our thoughts were about certain things. A place to kind of process.” (Student 2.1)

Having the program as a setting where this student and his peers could look to one another for emotional support has been a beneficial aspect of the bonding and relationship building that has enhanced to his experience at his university. In supporting these young men academically and emotionally, Program 1 may be adding to the well-being of the campus climate by encouraging and promoting healthy relationship with this community of students it so purposefully aims to retain and graduate.

Going to college, like the other two students, was not an option for Student 3.1. As child of Nigerian parents, Student 3.1 shared that college and graduate school was heavily emphasized and encouraged at an early age. Graduating in a week, Student 3.1 reflected on his college experience and how it has impacted different areas of his life:
“...it’s been the best time of my life, so. Um, I don’t know, it’s really been an opportunity for me to grow in all areas of my life. Um, physically, uh, like I care more about my health and stuff like that. Um, mentally, you know um, not only in regard to academic school work and stuff like that, but you know, um I had to, you know, really take charge of my mental health and stuff like that. Um, emotionally, of course, that kind of ties into my mental health and stuff like that. Spiritually, you know, since I’ve been, uh, on my own away from my parents, I’ve had to, you know, figure out my meaning, my purpose out there. You know, grow closer to God. Um, career wise, I mean, I’m going to med school, so, that’s that was the end goal of college for real.” (Student 3.1)

Being away from home and his uncertainty about how he would adapt to Alabama were concerns he had entering his freshman year. During the first couple of months of his freshman year, he only knew a few people, and only a few of those people were Black students. After doing some research on different programs and organizations the university offered, he found out about Program 1 and signed up to become a mentee his sophomore year. However, Student 3.1 credited his involvement with Program 1, being a member of a fraternity, and his volunteer activities to his success and growth throughout his college experience.

Once acclimated to campus, he was surprised to discover the university’s Black community was close. The various Black student affiliated programs and clubs kept students in touch socially by having events, meetings, and communicating often via GroupMe chat sessions. The only times he felt differently was in his classes:

“...the only difference would be, like my classes and stuff like that. Um, like whenever, um, like whenever...Like I don’t know. I think that’s when I first kind of...Cause I always, I knew I am Nigerian, but like it wasn’t until college I kind of realized I’m Black. You know what I’m saying, especially in the eyes of everybody else. So that, that was a part of my, you know growth too.” (Student 3.1)

Transitioning from a majority Black space from his Georgia high school to his majority White university presented the realization of how he is viewed by others racially rather
than just by his Nigerian heritage. Student 3.1 welcomed this eye-opening realization and continued to seek out spaces where Black students congregated but also pursued leadership opportunities that were not Black student focused. The classroom setting still presents instances of isolation from his White peers that he has come to face:

“...there are very few Black people. As I kept moving upwards in my classes, the number of Black people started to decrease. Um, and I felt like my White uh, classmates kind of looked at me some kind of way. Because like, for example, when we have lab work, I would know the answer, but they would kind of like push me aside and try to listen to someone else, whether they’re White or whether they are Indian. You know, they would take their answer over mine. Then they will come back, and I would be right, and they’d be like surprised and be like, “oh, you know the answer?” So, since I could turn some lab work in separately, and it wasn’t group work, I would just go ahead and turn it in.”

(Student 3.1)

Facing isolating situations such as these, encouraged Student 3.1 to work independently and not fully engage with his peers in his classes. Student 3.1 admitted to feeling like his “academic ability is challenged by his peers because of his race on a regular basis.”

Student 3.1 has taken this reality and used it to fuel his academic and social success throughout his entire college career, not allowing it to interfere with his perseverance.

Unlike the first two student interviews, Student 3.1 had a different impression of the purpose of the program and did not immediately join Program 1. He thought Program 1 was a tutoring program and that was not something of interest at the time. Two of his friends who had been mentees during their freshman year would tell him about various social activities and resources they acquired from participating in Program 1 and seemed to be having a great time with other Black males in the program. Program 1 has been perceived as a, “brotherhood in a club than an enrichment program…they think we’re just you know a social organization,” (Student 3.1). For example, Student 3.1 shared
when other students see Program 1 students having a good time and interacting on and off campus, most students think Program 1 is a social club and they do not see all the other inner-workings of the program.

Similar to the first two students, Program 1’s coordinator has contributed to Student 3.1’s personal development as a Black male. As a Black woman, the coordinator has advised and educated the young men of Program 1 on a wide array of topics that could affect how they view and interact with women:

“She, she fits in well with [name of Program 1] honestly. She’s like, she’s like my big, she’s like my big sister, for real, for real. Like that’s the kind of relationship we have built over the past couple of years. And I mean, she gives us a different perspective whenever she gets, or goes on her little, um, speeches. Um, she gives a different perspective, you know, of the Black man in relation to the Black woman too, you know. So, like she’s quick to talk to us about slut shaming. You know stuff like that. You know, calling girls hoes. Um, you know, um respecting, you know, their bodies and stuff like that. So, she puts a lot of stuff like that into perspective. [Admin’s name] does a great job of doing that too, but you know, since she’s a woman, I feel like when she gives those kinds of talks, it makes it more, like, more valid.” (Student 3.1)

Having a Black woman as Program 1’s coordinator has provided Student 3.1 and his peers the opportunity to understand and learn about a woman’s perspective on various topics as well as how to interact and relate to a woman that has a genuine interest in their overall well-being.

Themes. Several themes emerged from the Program 1 interviews. Although not a primary goal of Program 1, cross campus collaboration appears to be significant for supporting the participants academically as well as socially. Program 1 is situated under a department which supports programs and initiatives geared toward diverse communities of students and purposes. It is possible that if Program 1 was an entity of its own, the participants may not be as heavily exposed to building relationships with students other
than themselves and they may not have the opportunity to engage in leadership opportunities or team building activities that enhance their college experience. These types of experiences may be broadening the students’ leadership skills, personal development, and building interpersonal relationships.

Program 1 has provided a safe space for the participants to connect, share, and talk about issues and concerns specific to being Black men on a majority White campus and within society. For example, the noticeable instances of exclusion in their classes where their intellectual abilities have been doubted or when they have confided in one another about a personal challenge they may be trying to navigate. Having a space safe where they trust one another as well as the administrators, provides a sense of comfort and belonging that has not been evident in other settings within the campus.

A sense of community and brotherhood permeates the participants description of Program 1. As mentors and mentees, they describe learning how to support one another as a minority group on campus. They encourage one another that they are not alone by studying together, getting involved with campus activities, and seek out leadership opportunities that lend to their college experience and personal growth. Participating in roles and activities outside of Program 1 allows these young men to experience college similarly to their non-Black peers. Additionally, these young Black men becoming more connected within the campus’ community is providing faculty, students, administrators, and departments are gaining a more diverse experience in various roles working with Program 1 and its participants. As members of the campus community, the opportunity to interact and build relationships with Black males who are not student athletes is providing a more holistic understanding of Black males on their campus. Moreover, the
cross-campus collaborations that occur and existence of Program 1 on this campus is creating a more heterogeneous experience for the campus community.

**Program 2**

**Program setting.** The next program for this study, Program 2, is located on a mid-size campus in Georgia. Opening its doors in the late 1800s, Program 2’s institution is prominently known for its expertise in the field of engineering along with specialties in the sciences, specifically technology. Program 2 aims to equip Black males in the program with resources that enhance their academic and social development which includes robust leadership training and effective mentoring. Admin 2 shared that the program’s foundation is built on five dimensions: “*purpose and ambition, identity bonding, mentoring and modeling, visionary leadership, and social engagement,*” all of which support the retention, graduation, and job placement of Black males at the institution.

My first interview from Program 2 was with the Assistant Director [Admin 2], an African American/Black woman who is also an alumna of the university. Similar to Program 1, Program 2 is located centrally on campus in an office for student services geared to support the underrepresented populations and initiatives. Differently from Program 1, Program 2 is housed under the institution’s Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion which is specifically established to support retention efforts, enhance experiences, and prepare all minority students for graduate studies and careers.

**History.** We began the interview with an overview of Program 2’s history. As a member of a university system for the state of Georgia, in 2011 the institution became a recipient of grant funding to launch a Black male initiative program [Program 2].
Program 2 is supported by the institution and the state. The grant is a statewide initiative intended specifically to increase the number of Black male graduates from any of the 26 public institutions in the state of Georgia. Each university which received the grant is required to develop and sustain a program that incorporates promoting a healthy mentality toward academic persistence and academic good standing (e.g. GPAs) through each year; the program will result in graduation for the Black male participants. The university has received the grant for Program 2 for eight consecutive years. Admin 2 had an early introduction and role as a graduate research assistant for two years working with the grant after she completed her Ph.D. Upon completing her Ph.D., Admin 2 was encouraged to apply for the role of Assistant Director and got the job. In her current role as Assistant Director, Admin 2 in the office oversees a total of four initiatives, which include Program 2. Admin 2’s recollection of the history of Program 2 painted a picture of why the university chose to take on this initiative:

“...To my understanding, the grant’s purpose was around that Black men's enrollment in higher education that had started to decline from a national level. Georgia was seeing some of that. It was also during the time where unique studies were coming out around men of color. They were kind of the forgotten group. What [former director’s name] proposed was for us to look at was GPA performance. That was the first push of saying, "Yes they [Black males] are here but on average, they are at lower levels...something is needed to target this group that fall between the gaps.” (Admin 2)

The push to help increase GPAs of Black males at the university became one of the first major tasks. According to Admin 2, the university provided significant support for other groups, including women in STEM fields, but Black males were not specifically addressed despite major gaps in GPAs between URM groups. Program 2 slowly began to develop. Admin 2 further elaborated on essential aspects that were aimed at Black
students’ sense of belonging which had an impact on their academic performance as well as on their feeling socially connected to the campus, particularly Black males. She referenced this aspect as Black males needing an “affirmed identity” with the campus:

“...We talked about used to be a few more them having a space. [Name of the university] used to have a few Black sororities and fraternities and they used to have a house on the campus. They don't anymore. It used to be a more common space in the student center for Black students. That didn't exist anymore. Our Black organizations still existed, but they have small offices that don't really account for conference meeting space and that type of thing. Not having their own cultural space on campus was another ... then how do they find each other without a space? Something to bring them together. Creating affirming identities so that they can be more affirmed in self-efficacy and performance. Things like that. Kind of connecting those pieces. Which we felt had an impact on retention.” (Admin 2)

Program 2 was established to serve as this space, a space for Black males to gather and connect with one another as peers pursuing their studies and fully immersed in the college experience that was not necessarily created with them in mind. Bringing these young Black men together would be encouraging to their academic self-concept and level of engagement by working with one another academically and interacting socially as a network of support. Building connections for Program 2 participants both on and off campus was essential for their personal development:

“...The third element was around connecting with alumni. I'm [Admin 2] alumni. Our executive director was alumni. The faculty-alumni-student connection was core. Those are the three reasons. The network building for Black males at all levels at [name of university]. The performance trends. The affirming of identity that then impacts accountability, self-efficacy etc.” (Admin 2)

Admin 2 emphasized the importance of Black males feeling interconnected with different members of the university community, a feeling that lends to the development of interpersonal relationships that could result in a mentee-mentor bond. While obtaining a mentor aids in Black males’ college experience, Admin 2 explained how mentoring was
not the only core value that shaped Program 2’s model. In developing Program 2, research models for Black male achievement were explored to pinpoint distinct properties that would make the program unique to Black male experience at a PWI:

“We wanted it to be research based. We didn't want to just do the basic programs. Because programs are out there, right? I think in the past, people [administrators of programs for Black males] went with need based rather than research based. If I'm in a school and I'm realizing this is happening to our Black males, then a lot of them will say it's a mentoring thing. It's not just mentoring. It's not just tutoring. We do that in our department for all our URM's. What is it we really are targeting with this? That's unique at the intersection of being Black male student at a predominantly White institution in STEM... we did a little research and found cultural developments kind of around intersectionality and inclusive identity. Basically, we looked at [name of Program 2] as some type of research model that we then can guide where we're going with our programmatic initiatives rather than saying, "Oh, okay, we're just going to mentor or do a workshop. That just hasn't been our approach.”” (Admin 2)

Admin 2 stressed the concerted effort that went into the development of Program 2. Outside of academic support and mentoring, the administrators wanted to also focus on cultural competency and identity development. The identity component was important. As a Black woman overseeing the program, Admin 2 emphasized the importance of the students in the program seeing other Black men from the university such as the former director and executive director step in and lead the programs/workshops. At other times, she has the students take the lead in facilitating sessions, so they are being seen as leaders amongst their peers. In her role as Assistant Director, Admin 2 allows her voice as a Black woman in a leadership position to serve another important purpose:

“...for me being a Black female in this role I am careful about embodiment and affirmation. I say that it is because of my own identity. It was a little easier when I was working with [former director’s name] because we could come together and collaborate then literally in most programs, I did not want an up-front speaking role. He'd be like, "But you're the one." I'm like, "Trust me on this." Even if I developed the full show, the PowerPoint, etc. I thought that was important. So, since I still
do, I put my student assistants out front quite often. And our Executive Director [also male] I'll literally pull him in like, "Hey, I need you to do these soft pieces." I think embodiment is part of identity development. Some things you don't have to say, they see. But when I do speak I am quite affirming. That engagement consistency from a programmatic aspect is within the program. I am strategically aware and intentional about that.” (Admin 2)

Admin 2 believes speaking to the young men in an affirming manner is encouraging and a reminder that someone is in their corner. Further, this nurturing approach Admin 2 utilizes appears to motivate the students to seek out leadership roles and engage in other campus activities outside of Program 2. Admin 2 further emphasized that Program 2 is “intentionally relational,” by having the participants consistently engage with one another and with her, as well as various departments and roles that include other members of the campus community.

Description of program. Program 2 is primarily run by Admin 2. An executive director, an African American/Black man, oversees the overarching department that houses Program 2 and its partner offices which focus on diversity and inclusion efforts for the campus. Currently, the department is searching for a director that will oversee the various offices which include Program 2, academic services, Hispanic/Latino student support services, as well as an office that promotes and serves women students in the STEM fields. All of these offices were developed to provide programs and pathways, which support the success of students who have been historically underrepresented.

Admin 2 explained how Program 2 is essentially run by the students. She provides the funding, resources and the on-campus opportunities to help the students conceptualize their ideas for activities and programs. This involvement allows the students to feel as
though they have a leadership role within a community of other Black males that has been established to support their academic achievement and well-being.

Students in Program 2 serve in a variety of roles. Some of the participants have been hired in the office by Admin 2 to work with Program 2 as student assistants and also to work in roles that support other URM initiatives of the department. One of the roles Admin 2 encourages returning participants of Program 2 to apply for is as peer counselors or tutors for an annual, five-week residential, summer program for incoming students. The summer program provides prep-courses in introductory STEM courses as well as service projects and civic engagement. Admin 2 instructs a course in the program as well. All newly accepted students are eligible to apply and attend the summer program but historically, underrepresented minority students have participated in the program.

Admin 2 explained what being a peer counselor entails for her students in Program 2:

“...A lot of the peer mentors from [name of Program 2] also sign up to be peer counselors for the summer program. This is another way I have constant day-to-day engagement with them. They are really getting to experience that leadership development piece as they work with students outside of [name of Program 2].” (Admin 2)

As peer counselors, the students from Program 3 are engaging with incoming students which may be another way Program 3 is building student relationships. Additionally, even though the summer program is not a core component of Program 2, it appears to be another way Admin 2 maintains regular interaction with the students and provides them with leadership opportunities.

**Program practices.** Students from Program 2 have the opportunity to participate as peer mentors in the program. The peer mentor component of Program 2 allows for the students to regularly interact and share experiences with one another. Admin 2 explained
how in addition to interacting with one another as mentors and mentees, the peer mentoring component of the program adds another level of engagement she is able to have with the students:

“...When I take the delegation to the Men of Color summit that is probably the most intense engagement that a group of participants get with me directly. That is because with the sessions, with the travel, with the conversation in the car, with the daily debriefing they get to see me not just being [states her name, that's intentional. I keep that with a cohort and I do hand select who those people are. I think in this program, especially here, peer mentors is the biggest component that I will probably interact more with that cohort of mentors. So we have about 12 now. We have peer-to-peer mentors and I mentioned [names the early arrival program] counselors, and then I have my student assistants. Those become [name of Program 2] ambassadors. I meet with them differently. You go through needs or whatever. Then they go out to interact with their mentees and have the more weekly engagement. They have to do the biweekly reporting of, "I met with so and so. Or these are the issues and concerns. This is what's really facing us." Type thing. Our peer-to-peer mentoring component aligns with our [name of another peer to peer mentoring program under the department]. Outside of Program 2, the department has a peer to peer mentoring program where all incoming first-year students, both transfer and first-time freshman are partnered with a peer-mentor. They have peer mentor reach out weekly they do different workshops etc. a subset of those mentors are peer mentors for [the name of Program 2].

(Admin 2)

Program 2 provides its peer mentors an opportunity to advance into another leadership role as ambassadors. This opportunity which requires the peer mentor students to report back with updates on how other students are doing in the program allows Admin 2 more contact with the students. Additionally, Program 2’s peer mentors are peer mentors for another departmental program that provides peer mentors for incoming and transfer students. Aligning the two peer mentoring programs may enhance the diverse types of relationships students from Program 2 are developing. It appears that Program 2 is intentional with relationship building both inside and outside the program.
**Program participants.** The student interviews for Program 2 were conducted in the midst of the summer term. Admin 2 explained to me that several of the program participants major in engineering and are around during the summer taking courses to eliminate some of the heavy course loads they carry. Additionally, while some of them are around taking courses, a few of them work in the office for Admin 2 as they plan and prepare for the early arrival summer program discussed previously.

Admin 2 provided me access to a study area in the department which students typically use throughout the year to conduct the interviews. The first student [Student 1.2] met with me early one morning when he didn’t have class and was able to tell me about his experience in Program 2 and at the university. Student 1.2, originally from a small, rural town about two hours from the university, is also one of Admin 2’s student assistants for the office. In his role as a student assistant, Student 1.2 assists Admin 2 with events for Program 2. He shared details of how being in this role has provided opportunities to highlight Black men in Program 2 across the campus in a positive light:

"...I also work for the department [department that houses Program 2]. I'm one of the student assistants. I guess I know a lot more than average. Like, I set up the programs, I set up workshops, I set up scholarship spotlights, I set up the relationships with other buildings, and I contact some of the other people [students in Program 2] of who want to be a mentor...One of them that I led was the scholarship spotlight in particular. It was called [name of scholarship spotlight initiative]. We tried to advertise it as a student's spotlight, essentially. Just trying to show off the fact that our students [Black males; students in Program 2] are doing great things 'cause sometimes they're athletes or sometimes they are that of scholars in terms of being very good researchers. I know there's a couple of guys who got the NSF grant. Those are pretty competitive to get, so it's pretty great to see somebody of whom get an award such as this. Doing that, I thought that was great to highlight them. We were trying to do it on a bi-weekly or monthly basis. That was one of the programs that we did and went pretty well. We got a couple of students to be highlighted and decided to build some of that rapport and get the word out that there are people of whom that look us who're doing great things, not shooting people. That was
good. Another one is that of our end of the year banquet. I don't wanna say that's my idea in particular, but we did a lot of setting up for that. It was getting the students together in order to start that conversation as well, in terms of getting them to recognize who's doing well in the university because all of us are doing well. Therefore, it's trying to get that generation, it's like class. Conversation between the seniors down to the juniors and sophomores, freshman, what have you. There's a lot of freshman and then, some of them go off and do other things and that's fine. As long as you find your community, this is good, this is the point of the program. But then, there's some people who are there at the end of whom are seniors and we give them a gift and we have them have a chance to stand up and speak back to the freshman and say, "Here are the things that I did well or here are the things I wish I could've done during my time at the university." (Student 1.2)

Student 1.2 appeared proud and spoke with conviction as he described how his role in Program 2 as a student assistant has helped him to be a leader and a positive example to the younger men in the program. Student 1.2 praises Program 2 for presenting a positive image of Black men to the campus community through its various programming and initiatives. In agreement with Admin 2, Student 1.2 shared how presenting positive examples of Black men excelling is a key aspect of Program 2 (e.g. mentoring and embodiment). Student 1.2 was proud to share his close role in Program 2’s efforts intentionally created to deliver a different narrative of how Black men are viewed on the campus.

Having a dual role in Program 2 of mentor and student assistant, has helped him to be very intentional when interacting with the younger students in the program. He shared that an important relationship develops early on between the upper classmen and the freshmen:

“...There's the [name of summit] that happens at the [name of another university]. We went to that and it was a lot of me going up to the students [freshman in Program 2] and saying, “hey, you're interested in this thing. This guy is interested in this thing or is really good at this thing. You guys should meet each other.” Stuff such as this. As well as that of trying to find
all the freshman and just smoothing out some of the common problems 'cause, I don't know, sometimes, they still have a high school mentality of, "Oh, we got eight people together and want to pick on you, do this stupid." Doing stuff like that as well as making sure that the freshman aren't just isolated with themselves and upper class men with themselves. Making those connections between the two groups [upperclassmen and freshman participants] 'cause I think that's where the information transfer really occurs. (Student 1.2)

Student 1.2 further emphasized that breaking down any barriers between freshman and upperclassman in Program 2 serves as a reminder that they are there to support and learn from one another; this program is for them to create a community where they feel connected to other students who look like them and who are working hard to thrive as Black men on a predominantly White campus. Student 1.2 shared that continuously sharing knowledge, experiences, and resources with one another helps the participants feel as though they belong to a community and it also helps to sustain the success of the program by grooming freshman to become mentors.

Student 1.2 has been able to collaborate with other student organizations and departments; this collaboration has diversified his undergraduate experience. Student 1.2 continued to express how Program 2 has greatly added to his college experience by building relationships and encouraging his involvement as well as making him known on campus:

"...she [Admin 2] doesn't wanna be the face of the program because she can't be the face for African-American males 'cause she's not an African-American male. So that's me and that's fantastic. 'Cause, now people ... I send out all these e-mails and stuff and people are like, "You're that guy..." (smiles and laughs).

(Student 2.1)

Student 1.2 has worked closely with other student organizations, such as the Hispanic student association, the university’s alumni chapter, and other group Black student
affiliated groups (e.g. National Society of Black Engineers, African American Student Union, and Black Greek letter organizations) to facilitate programs that support minority students in the STEM fields. Student 1.2 shared that if he was not involved with Program 2, he may not have explored other opportunities to get involved with other student activities. He shared that being able to have a leadership role in Program 2 and to connect with different students across campus and departments has shaped and modeled his undergraduate experience. Like many of the other students interviewed for this study, the programs have played an instrumental role in building a community of relationships that have been valuable to their undergraduate experience.

Student 2.2’s interview was conducted via Google hangout video chat. He had just completed his senior year one week prior to the interview and was waiting to begin his first full time job in D.C. A native of Virginia, Student 2.2’s transition to the university was a little different from others interviewed because he came in as an out-of-state student. Student 2.2 grew up in a predominantly Black suburb and went to a predominantly Black high school. Once he arrived on campus for his freshman year, he noticed a blatant difference at his new environment on campus: it was predominantly White, and he didn’t see many students who looked like him:

“...When I first got there, it was kind of a culture shock because I was used to, on an everyday basis, seeing people who looked like me and spoke like me and that kind of thing; and now I was in a situation where how I talked was funny to other people. I don't sound like students from Atlanta. I know that much, but it was also students outside of ... like non-minority students.” (Student 2.2)

Though the campus is categorized as a PWI, it has a significant Asian student population. Student 2.2. shared how he enjoyed meeting students from different countries during the
early summer program; however, when fall semester classes began, he recalled an
exchange with a White student who questioned his academic ability:

“...So, we [himself and a White student in one of his classes] were talking about what we were doing over the summer. It was this student who sat next to me in the class, and I told them about my situation, like what kind of school [referring to his high school] I went to and the expenses; and I guess he just assumed that I didn't have academic rigor that was as strong as his, so yeah, it was an interesting conversation. I was really angry at the time. I actually went and talked to my friends [Black students] about it, and we had this little conversation, but as we talked about, you learn to ignore them ... or not ignore them. You process it, but it also gives you a bit of strive to prove that you're better, I guess.” (Student 2.2)

The Black students he processed this incident with were his peers from Program 2.

Student 2.2. had a quick introduction of how he was being viewed as one of the few Black students in his classes, if not the only Black student in some cases. He shared how grateful he was to have this group of students to confide in and work through what he was experiencing; he also shared how several of his peers in Program 2 had had similar experiences. Even though Student 2.2 was angered by the incident, having a community of peers in Program 2 with whom he could talk, motivated him to work even harder and demonstrate how more than capable he was and how deserving he and his peers were as Black males at the university. Student 2.2 became more aware of how he was being excluded in classroom projects and being negatively viewed by his White classmates. He recalled how he had to approach these interactions in some of his classes:

“...you kind of feel when it's time to find project partners and that kind of thing, and you kind of can assume who doesn't wanna work with you and who does wanna work with you. I always found that interesting. Unless you dress a certain way or you look like you're pretty smart, I feel like you're not always gonna be somebody's first pick for a project partner. So, I always had to go out, get up, and confront people, put on my voice ... like my striving voice ... and make it seem like, yeah, we're gonna do good on this project. I don't wanna say dress a certain way. If you didn't ... It's
hard to explain, I guess. If you didn't put out this vibe of that you're super polished, you're super smart... that kind of thing, like your present yourself a certain way, then they [White students in his classes] might think you're gonna be flaky or that kind of thing.” (Student 2.2)

Student 2.2 shared that he became mindful of the type of academic environment he had entered. He had to adjust to the climate of his classroom settings to be included and actively participate in required coursework projects like the rest of his peers. As he recalled his transition to the college experience at the university, he re-emphasized how grateful he was to be a part of Program 2 and how sharing the experience with the other participants and Admin 2 kept him encouraged to succeed academically and not allow the exclusion to distract him from his goals.

Similar to Student 2.1, he was introduced to Program 2 by attending the aforementioned early summer program. His time in Program 2 has afforded him opportunities to develop his mentoring and leadership skills. Program 2 has been an inspiration for him to set goals in his career path:

“...We had high school students come to visit [Name of Program 2], and I got to speak with them, so I got used to interacting and speaking with another student who were younger than me. I feel like that's important, because in my job, I wanna be a project leader when I get older. I'm gonna be speaking with people who are potentially younger, less skills than me, and I wanna get used to doing that. [Program of 2] led me in that way.” [Name of Program 2], prides itself on teaching leadership, mentorship, service, and those kinds of things. That's given me something to model and set formal goals. Coming through [Name of Program 2], I knew that I wanted to strive for a job. I knew not to get my GPA under a certain percentage if I wanted to get into certain places. I knew that I wanted to give back because the best way to insure ... one way to get a good network and to expand the Black sphere around campuses...mentoring.” (Student 2.2)

Student 2.2 further shared how Program 2 set an example of what being a mentor and leader embodied for him and his peer participants. He felt empowered to mentor
younger Black males and aspires to bring that same motivation into his upcoming job.

Similar to many of the students in this study, these programs are teaching young Black men not only how to represent themselves but also how to uplift their Black community in different settings by exemplifying leadership.

When I asked Student 2.2 what aspects of the program contributed to his personal growth and success, he commented on how Program 2 helped him to understand who is his and the importance of Black men having a space dedicated to their development as a community:

“...For me, the most important was leadership, so I don't consider myself like the prime leader at this point, but I do think it's [being in Program 2] taught me how to grow, and to strive to become the best leader. I think that's probably the most important. Second important would just be community. I feel like it's super important to find your community and [Program 2] taught me how to reach out to other students, and just communicate really, with other people. [Admin 2’s name] would talk to me about, the importance as upper classman to reaching out to other students and get them interested in the program. I feel like finding a place for Black males to express themselves is very important, because a lot of times you come in and you feel like you don't have a place where you can be yourself. I guess you might feel a need to change. I talked to people at [name of HBCU], and that's one of the big things that they [Black male students] like about being at a HBCU. It's an environment where you can be yourself, and you can express disinterest or your interests.” Finding out who you are is very important... So, when I came into college, I felt like my worth was based on my GPA, my academic achievement. So, I feel like finding resources to kind of tell Black students to think about what their self-worth is. What do they value? I feel like that's important.” (Student 2.2)

It appears that Admin 2 encourages the participants to share their knowledge and experiences with one another as a way to build a sense of community. Within the program, the young men are operating in a space where they can engage in healthy dialogue about their self-discovery. According to Student 2.2 and Admin 2, there appear to be little to no spaces on the campus where Black males feel that they can be
themselves in contrast to non-Black students. Student 2.2 believes that Program 2 is not only adding to the participants’ college experience, but also is helpful to the social climates of campuses by helping them to learn about the Black male perspective and incorporating those outlooks into the campus community, particularly those whom they are interested in retaining and graduating:

“...well, because if you have happy students, you're making a better campus environment for everybody. You don't want to support just some students... because colleges, well, they’re made up of students, so I feel like that's expected. So yeah, they [programs for Black males] are kind of servicing. It's also giving them [college campuses] different perspectives, different viewpoints. So, I feel like that helps them [colleges] grow and how they [students] conduct themselves at college. So, I understand how that a program can be a learning experience for the college and the students.” (Student 2.2)

According to Student 2.2, being a part of Program 2 has allowed him to experience the personal benefits that have added to his undergraduate career. Being in Program 2 has encouraged more of the Black males to increase their overall campus involvement by engaging in various programming outside of Program 2: dialogues, leadership roles, and more frequent interactions with faculty, peers, and administration. Furthermore, he also shared how programs serving Black males diversifies the climate not only for students but also institutions with these programs are gaining a better understanding of Black male students through more than one lens.

The last student from Program 2 for this study (Student 3.2) is a fourth-year student majoring in mechanical engineering who is a student assistant for Admin 2 and a member of a Black fraternity. He started our interview highlighting how much he has enjoyed his experience in Program 2:

“...I've liked my experience here at [name of university], especially with the [name of Program 2] ... Being as a small Black community, and to me
it feels like, I always explain to people like a small church. You know, like when you go to a small church, most everybody knows everybody. And then, if there's a new person, it's like, "Okay, let's all get to know this person." Because we're a small collective group. I think the only downside to that is that, I don't have any White friends outside the program, at all. The demographic of my high school was crazy diverse as far as the students. It was really, I saw it as a melting pot. It was very diverse where I came from, like I had White friends. I had a lot of friends in high school and then here, it's like, I just have Black friends. It hit me a while ago, that I just have Black friends, but here it's definitely more ... I'm going to say separated. That's what it feels like here. It's just separated.” (Student 3.2)

Coming from a very diverse high school and neighborhood in Virginia, Student 3.2 embraced the diversity he grew up with and desired the same for his college experience. However, during his time on campus he has noticed a clear divide between the Black and White students, specifically in his classes:

“...When I'm in a classroom, I always feel like I got to prove myself, like because I'm the only one there. Being in a classroom, you're always kind of like the odd man out. Like labs, group work and things like that. It's why I got to prove myself and be like, "Yeah, I'm good enough to be here." (Student 3.2)

Student 3.2 expressed that he is well-aware of why he has experienced isolation in the classroom with his White peers. Being a one of few Black men in his classroom has presented challenges where he has had to encourage himself to demonstrate that he is deserving to be in his classes and is capable of being successful academically. The perception of Black men on his campus is in line with how some Black men are perceived in society as well:

“...I haven’t given it much thought to what they [White students in his classes] would think about me. I know they're thinking something. I don't know, I guess I always ... I would think that they would think I'm just feeding into this stereotype. I'm not talking about stealing, crime, or whatever. I'm talking when it comes to music it's very clear, and they'd be like, "oh, you're just one of those Black guys that always listens to such and such." And I know, like okay, that's what they are going to see me as.” (Student 3.2)
Although Student 3.2 is aware of how he is being viewed, he has managed to acknowledge the exclusion and isolation but has not allowed it to deter him from participating in coursework activities and has continued to excel academically. In line with what Admin 1 from Program 1 stated, “Black men are not monolith”; that is, they are not all criminals, entertainers, or athletes based on the music that they listen to or how they present themselves. With the support and sense of community he found in Program 2, Student 3.2 has chosen to prove to his White peers otherwise by being himself and not let a one-dimensional image of what they choose to believe about Black men on his campus define him. While Student 3.2 has experienced a disconnect with his White peers in his classes, he has also observed that other student groups of color, such as the Asian and Hispanic/Latino communities, are rather close on his campus. He particularly has had more interactions with the Hispanic population because programs, specifically for Black men and Hispanic students, are housed in the same department:

“… I can't really remember I had a real interaction with someone who was Asian. I feel as though that community is really tight knit. I can't remember the last time I had an interaction with them. As far as the Hispanic community, or Latino community, I have a few Hispanic or Latino friends, mainly because [name of department where Program 2 and program for Hispanic students is housed] caters to the Black and Hispanic population, so I know I've been around them but not ... I really haven't had a one on one with them. I've never had an issue with them [Hispanic students] because like we're both minorities, we're both trying to be great, we kind of understand that. I know when it's like, I'm around White people, I don't feel as I could be myself all the way. I would feel like they would think some sort of thing about me, so I just tone it down around them, and when I go back to my people [peers in Program 2], I'm myself again. We'll [Program 2 participants] come back and we'll just vent or something like that.” (Student 3.2)

As a Black male on a PWI, Student 3.2 shared that he is constantly negotiating how to present himself among his White peers as a norm. He appears to feel more comfortable
around other students of color, in particular his peers in Program 2. Having a sense of community and connecting with Program 2 participants allows him to confide and process the interactions he has encountered with other White students. Even though Student 3.2 previously expressed a desire for relationships with White students, he understands that on his campus he has not found an opportunity to connect with White students. Instead, he has chosen to navigate the majority White spaces to the best of his ability with the support of Program 2 and its participants.

One aspect of being in Program 2 that has been most beneficial to Student 3.2 has been getting to build relationships with other Black students and faculty on campus. Student 3.2 credits Program 2 with providing programming that bring Black students and faculty together:

“…Whenever [name of Program 2] puts on an event, there's always Black students and faculty... it gives you a community that can help you. All the participants there, we get to know each other, so those students will be able help each other. Then there's Black faculty who attend an academic empowerment fair, which is a huge plus, because most students don't ... A lot of us don't really know the Black faculty on campus. The event focuses on how we [Black students] need to build a stronger community, and how that could better help us succeed. Scholastically, Black males are not the highest on this campus. Being able to build a community and have people to reach out to actually see how people are doing. A lot of people can ask how people are doing, and go like, "Yeah, I'm good, I'm straight, blah blah blah." And that's just not the case. I have people that can actually care and be able to pick you up is definitely something we talked about. When there's [name of Program 2] event, and they [referring to Black faculty] show up, they want to show up, knowing that you can reach out to those people, whether it be a need for help or you just want to network, I think that's how it's [being in Program 2] has best helped me.”

(Student 3.2)

Program 2, Student 3.2 admitted that his college experience would not have been an easy transition without the various connections and relationships he has developed over the
last four years with Black students and faculty who have greatly supported him academically, socially, and emotionally:

“…If there was no [name of Program 2], I wouldn't be as aware of all these Black resources to help. There are quite a few and if it wasn't for [name of Program 2], I wouldn't have known about going to certain professors and people to just talk. Even if it's just counseling or whatever.” (Student 3.2)

He shared how a trip Program 2 sponsored for participants to attend a conference focusing on Black males really emphasized how activities, like the conference, helped him to further develop relationships and a sense of community within the program:

“… [Name of Program 2] definitely helped me to get to know more and more people. I know when I went to the [name of conference], I really only knew about two or three people there, and after the [name of conference] I was like, "Oh yeah these are so and so..." The [name of conference] was two or three days, but being able to get to know them [other Black males in Program 2] and just build that comradery, now I see them around, and it's like we can speak, and hang out, stuff like that. People do check on each other too, I think that's been the biggest thing for me.” (Student 3.2)

Another major resource that has impacted Student 3.2’s undergraduate experience and him personally from Program 2 has been Admin 2. His relationship with Admin 2 appears to have helped shape his perspective what it means to represent the Black community on a predominantly White campus as well as in society:

“… She's the coolest. I feel as though I'm close to her, even though of course I work for her, she's done a lot for me. You can tell that she really cares about the students. She has opened my eyes to a whole bunch of things that ... Or at least made me think about things that I didn't really pay much attention to as far as like, how the school works, and what it means to be a minority on campus. She had this big talk with all of us [participants in Program 2] and helped us really think about how, not just the Black male voice, but just like the Black voice isn't heard. It really made me think about things and how to branch out to actually try and make a difference. She's always been like a mentor and friend to me. I'm only here during the school year, when I come here, I always stop by, and say what's up to [Admin 2’s name]. Even recently, I would just be in her office, and we'd just be talking for like two or three hours about anything.
But yeah, I definitely love [Admin 2’s name]. It is interesting [pauses to think] ...whenever I think to a bigger, much broader picture of Black women, they’re always supporting Black men all [stated with emphasis] the time. (Student 3.2)

Being able to discuss academic and personal topics with Admin 2 has provided an outlet for Student 3.2 to discuss his academic achievements and challenges.

It is also evident that Program 2 and Admin 2 have provided a safe space to process personal goals and concerns. Within Program 2, Students 1.2, Student 2.2 and Student 3.2 have benefited from having Admin 2 as a Black woman in a position of support and authority, guiding them as they navigate their undergraduate experiences on campus. Moreover, Admin 2 appears to have also encouraged these young Black men to use their voice not only on campus but also in other areas that may impact their life, such as their future careers, family, and society.

Themes. According to the data, Program 2 focuses heavily on empowering Black males to be leaders on campus and in the program. By connecting Program 2 participants with Black faculty and creating opportunities to facilitate programs and occupy roles of tutors, peer counselors, and mentors, the program appears to focus on mentoring and leadership. The participants interact with Black faculty who are committed to their well-being and success on campus and they also engage with one another as mentors, leaders within their own program. The program tends to provide examples of Black leaders, in this case Black faculty, for the young men to connect with and then as participants. In Program 2, students are continuously transferring knowledge and experiences with one another through their as mentor-mentee relationships.

Building a strong community appears to be beneficial academically and socially to the participants in Program 2. As Black men, they are constantly faced with
unwelcome emotions that emerge because they feel isolated in their classes or feel as though they need to prove themselves. Program 2 may be a space and community where they can engage in healthy dialogue with one another about the microaggressions they may have experienced. Having this space in Program 2 seems to bring the young men closer together and encourage them to face the isolation as a community. The sense of community the participants have discovered in Program 2 appears to motivate and empower the participants to stay focused on excelling academically and to uplift one another when faced with obstacles.

**Program 3**

**Program setting.** The last program for this study (Program 3) is located on one of three universities that make up a research consortium located in North Carolina. With approximately 25,000 undergraduates, the institution is well-known for STEM and agriculture and offers 106 other fields of study. Unlike Program 1 and Program 2, all of the interviews for Program 3 were conducted via Google Hangout video chat during the mid-summer of 2018. When I contacted Admin 3, who is the Assistant Director of Program 3, he had to obtain approval from senior level administration for Program 3 to proceed as a participant in this study.

Different from Program 1 and Program 2, Program 3 is a one of the many living and learning communities offered to students. The living and learning initiative at the university is where students apply to live with other students that have similar academic or personal interests. The communities encourage leadership development, team building, and engage in critical conversations that support inclusivity. Program 3 focuses
primarily on leadership while providing programs that target the areas of personal and professional development, academic achievement, and accountability.

**History.** Admin 3, an African American/Black male, has been with the program as the Assistant Director since 2015. Prior to his arrival in his current position with the program, Program 3 was previously named the African American Male Initiative. Administration decided to change the name to be more inclusive of Black males from different parts of the African diaspora. Admin 3 shared that in 2015, Program 3 was originally established because the housing program and the Academic and Student Affairs Division had a goal in mind to increase the number of living and learning communities that were on the campus. Stepping into his current role as Assistant Director, Admin 3 and another Assistant Director from a completely different part of campus collaborated and presented this opportunity to senior administration as a way to address some of the research and national trends on Black males in society. Admin 3 elaborated on the specific trends that Program 3 focused on and continues to revisit with today’s students:

“…Some of the national trends around persistence of Black males as well as matriculation to graduation were some of the trends that were presented. Also, some of the engagement involvement trends in terms of Black males from a national research stand point, how do we [institutions] continue to provide opportunities for men to engage on this campus, with them also realizing that a lot of these campuses weren't built with them in mind. I actually just did a presentation this year at a regional housing conference, where we actually did a sit-down video with some of the guys [Program 3 participants], and one of guys actually mentioned, "when [name of institution] was established it wasn't made with us in mind... they expect us [Black males] to come in and navigate this campus and this environment realizing that this institution wasn't built for us.'’’(Admin 3)
When asked what types of things the young men in the video were eluding to when they referenced “the institution not being built with them in mind,” Admin 3 summarized the students’ sentiments as follows:

“…they [institutions] weren't thinking about their [Black male students] needs from an educational resources standpoint, they weren't thinking about their needs from a social economic standpoint, they weren't thought about. You know, I [Admin 3] think that this university was originally established for White students who wanted to pursue their education, and so as we began to integrate the school systems and different things like that, I think that various universities ... I speak for myself, various universities just accommodated and made accommodations for Black males as they entered these spaces [PWIs] but didn't have the proper support networks set up in place to be able to talk through those things.”

(Admin 3)

Admin 3 believes that Black males entering higher education today are beginning to notice that resources specific to Black students are not being incorporated into institutions’ strategic plans. As an administrator who oversees a program for Black males at a PWI, Admin 3 often asks himself a couple of questions to serve as reminders of what Program 3 needs to continue to address as it progresses:

“…so, what are we doing from a university standpoint to provide spaces for them [Black males] to talk through that in a healthy way? And how do we then provide them with the skills necessary to navigate the campus?”

(Admin 3)

As Program 3 evolved, Admin 3 has kept these questions in mind as he cultivates an environment that promotes a sense of community, brotherhood, as well as academic and professional support for the participants in Program 3.

**Description of program.** As one of the university’s living and learning communities, Program 3 resides under the Division of Student Affairs and is in the Department of Housing. The program’s administration/staff is comprised of the Community Director, Assistant Director (Admin 3), Program Coordinator, and a graduate
Resident Director. Admin 3 summarized the various roles and some key aspects of their responsibilities. Admin 3’s reports to the Community Director, whose primary responsibility is to supervise Admin 3 and ensure that Program 3 is aligned with four pillars the program was established around.

Admin 3 provided a detailed overview of the pillars, which are aspirational, navigational, social, and the historical and cultural components. Three of the pillars are from Yosso’s Cultural Wealth Model (i.e. aspirational, navigational, and the social capital pillar. The model was designed to specifically “capture the talents, strengths and experiences that students of color bring with them to their college environment; the model represents a framework to understand how students of color access and experience college from a strengths-based perspective,” (Yosso, 2005). Admin 3 defined how the four pillars are employed to frame Program 3:

“...Aspirational focuses on the hopes and dreams of the men that come into our initiative, so what are they ultimately wanting to accomplish, and how can we help them develop the skills necessary to get there during their time with us. The thing that we want to focus on within the program is to help guys graduate and prepare for the job market and develop soft skills and communication. Navigational is how we describe their focuses on how do they navigate this space [PWI], how do they navigate this campus where they can be one or two Black males literally in their class, and so how do they navigate this space, how do they navigate this campus, how do we help them identify resources that they need to continue to matriculate to graduation and persist. We focus on developing a sense of resilience and discover a sense of self-empowerment. The social piece really focuses on how do I develop meaningful relationships with other Black men as well as other peer students who don’t identify like me...building our relationships with others and engagement with the community But there is also a community piece in terms of knowing what, knowing identities that I hold, how do I help create healthy communities and environments, and engage with the community as it relates to my goals. The final one that we just put on paper this summer is looking at the historical and cultural piece. We focus on the narrative of Black History with an emphasis at times on Black Male History, local and U.S. Black History because it's important for our guys to know where they come from
in order to know where they're going. In some cases, reteaching as much as we can about Black history, and dismantling some of the myths that they may have heard in K-12 or growing up and things like that. Especially in the generation where our guys coming in aren't learning about Black history in school, it's not part of the curriculum and so some of the first, this is the first time some of these guys are having an opportunity to really learn about their history from what they see and what they've heard and the different things that they see in the media. We do that in a plethora of different ways, this class that we are starting this year, it's going to be the first year of our class, it's going to be a big piece of helping us educate them on their history. Also understanding the importance of intersectionality, you know how me does being Black, me being Male, being heterosexual or identifying as gay, how does that all interact with one another. We try to do that.” (Admin 3)

Admin 3 utilizes the concepts of the pillars to construct the curricula of Program 3 where he creates diverse experiences for participants that include mentoring (social pillar), meetings (navigational pillar), field trips (historical and cultural pillar), and academic support (aspirational pillar).

In his role, Admin 3 is responsible for the overall direction of the program and creating experiences for the students that are valuable to their academic success and overall personal development. His primary role is to oversee the operational and administrative aspects of Program 3 which entail the programming for students. Within his responsibilities, one of the essential contributing factors to the program is to build relationships with campus and community partners that may help to diversify the opportunities and access to resources for the young men in the program.

Working closely with the Program Coordinator, Admin 3 supervises the assessment efforts for the program. During the time of the interview, Admin 3 shared that the Program Coordinator was in the process of completing a curriculum map that included programmatic goals for the academic year and the student learning outcomes
they hope are achieved. According to Admin 3, the curriculum map also helps to track the types of programming that have been impactful:

“...our mapping chart really gives us an opportunity to quantify the impact that we have in terms of what type of programs we're offering, where was our focus heavy versus where did we not give as much attention to, but then at the end of the year we always do focus groups. We do focus groups and give the guys the opportunity to kind of talk about their experience within the program. We'll use focus groups as a way to affirm, assess what we're doing, and different things like that.” (Admin 3)

Utilizing data collected from the focus groups also helps Admin 3 learn which aspects of Program 3 are not accommodating to the students’ needs. For example, the students shared that they typically study on their own and the study hall sessions were not helpful unless they had access to a tutor or additional academic resources during the sessions. This feedback from the students helps Admin 3 make adjustments to the types of academic support offered in the program. Lastly, the Program Coordinator works closely with Admin 3 to monitor the students’ academic progress with respect to challenges they may be having in specific courses and their G.P.A. Although there is no G.P.A requirement to participate in Program 3, Admin 3 shared that students in the program are aware there is an expectation to perform well academically and utilize the resources offered by the program and from the university.

Since 2015, Program 3 has significantly grown over the past three to four years, starting out with about 5 students and now serving 45-50 students. Students interested in joining Program 3, first submit an application with the Housing Department and then they can submit an application for a specific living and learning community. Students are eligible to join the program as early as freshman year or as late as senior year. Admin 3
shared that Program 3’s application includes some questions that help gauge their level of interest:

“...we ask students to talk about the perception, or the issues that Black males face in today's society, and really assess them on how well they identify issues, in addition to talking about why those issues may be problematic or concerning. The second question is what expectations they may have of the [name of Program 3] if given the opportunity to join. At that point, that's when we can make sure that what they want to take away from the experience in the program and the experience that we're trying to create aligns.” (Admin 3)

By asking these questions, Admin 3 and the Community Director gain an understanding of various interests and concerns that may be of importance to the applicants. This information is a way for the administrators to be intentional with the programming and the experiences Program 3 provides the students. The questions also assist with the assigning of roommates, if students have not selected one:

“...We have some people that select their roommates and we have some that we assign based off the answers to the questions that they answer on the housing application. The first go to, is we have three questions we ask in terms of their living environment and if we can get two out of three to match on those then that means that those two people are a match, but then also the other thing we try to take into consideration too is how they answer the program's application questions and see, then there is the potential learning opportunity that may result as opposed to just randomly pairing two people with one another. We also look at is there an opportunity to pair a sophomore with a first-year student so that they can automatically have that mentorship and peer relationship right out the gate. Relating to the scope of everything that we offer with our program. We try to be intentional with the program and have opportunities to develop relationships.” (Admin 3)

According to Admin 3, the application process for Program 3, serves as a way to establish relationships that may benefit the participants (e.g. peer mentoring). These relationships appear to be important objectives embedded in the program.
Students can occupy various roles in Program 3. Similar to Programs 1 and 2, the students in Program 3 play a significant role helping the administrators conceptualize and lead events and programming. Admin 3 outlined how some of the students work with him and the Community Director to stay on track with the planning and execution of programming:

“...They [students in the program] help develop programming ideas, we put a couple of staple programs in there. We have four mentors, known as Family Leaders who are faculty in the living and learning community associated with the program; we have two students from the program who are RAs dedicated specifically to the program—so between the six of them [Program 3 student leadership team] they can put on three to four programs a month. Their energy is more focused more so on the social programming than the educational programming. My Community Director meets with the whole [name of Program 3] student leadership team bi-weekly. They meet with him weekly to kind of assess where they're at with various programs and so in August when they get back, they'll be planning programs for September and October. He'll stay a couple months ahead of when programs are actually happening and ensure that we're meeting all of our pillars in terms of programs because it can be very easy for the guys to start focusing on solely social programming and when you start to map out from an assessment standpoint you look at the programs we've done and you say, "We've done 15 social programs and nothing on navigational." He uses those meetings to help keep them organized.”  
(Admin 3)

Having some of the students on this team, help Admin 3 and the Community Director ensure they are monitoring Program 3 to stay in line with the core principles of the program. Students on the leadership team may be enhancing their leadership skills by having an important role with planning events. Additionally, this role may also be increasing their amount of responsibility by having to manage their coursework and involvement in Program 3.

The last key element of Program 3 has been partnerships with other departments. Admin 3 understands that a living and learning community for Black males on a PWI in
the South, may bring about some negative perception of segregation. He admitted that developing cross-campus relationships has not only positively affected the students’ campus involvement but has also helped promote Program 3 efforts to the campus community:

“...Well I think we try to do a good job of empowering our guys to get out there and really make an impact on campus, so they collaborate with different organizations and different offices to host different types of programs. I think we do a good job making sure we have campus partnerships that really make this possible because we can't be in all spaces at one time so if our campus partners, are part of a conversation where somebody has a misunderstanding, is misunderstood in terms of what the [name of Program 3] is they can help us, they can help guide that discussion in the right place. So, in addition to the personal things it does for the students, this program helps break down some of those campus barriers as well, I believe. We've also had a lot of support both financially and kind of like marketing from throughout the university so we've had three or four spotlights done on either, the last we did we had a spotlight done on the last founder of the program to graduate, but different spotlights on the program educating the campus of what it is and the opportunities that are offered in different ways. We've got academic departments that we connected with, we've got Student Affairs departments that we've connected with, so the support is very strong in a lot of different directions. There are people looking to develop a relationship but our campus outreach and departments that we're connected with our reach is very wide.” (Admin 3)

Admin 3 believes educating the campus about Program 3 through the relationships he has built with other departments has helped minimalize misconceptions about the program. Additionally, these cross-campus relationships may have helped encourage the young men to diversify their campus activities outside of Program 3.

**Program practices.** A major practice in Program 3 is mentoring. Unlike Programs 1 and 2, Program 3’s the mentoring does not only come from the participants; the mentors involved with Program 3 are also members of the campus community (e.g.
faculty and admin/staff). Admin 3 shared Program 3’s philosophy on mentors and how the program acquires mentors for the students:

“One of the things that we [Program 3] do is, the research about mentorship really gets at the fact that assigning mentors and non-organic mentorship doesn’t work, so what we try to do every year and what we’ll do during a retreat is we’ll identify our faculty and staff, family leaders. Our family leaders are faculty and staff, made up of men and women, who work with a returning living and learning community member so that could be a sophomore, junior, or a senior, to provide mentorship for a group of five to seven students who are serving in that mentor capacity. We'll have them engage very early on and give the guys the opportunity to interact with those people. By the end of August the guys will fill out a Google Doc form with preferences in terms of who they feel like they connected with the most, and we'll try to meet the needs of the people in the [name of Program 3] by connecting them with one of their top two choices in terms of people that they connected with the most. Our family structure gives us the opportunity to provide that intimate mentorship to a smaller group of men in the program, and really gives us an opportunity to make sure that we're continuing to touch base and assess what struggles the guys are having to know what programmatic things we need to do moving forward. Our families that we have set up do a good job in helping us to provide that mentorship for the guys.”

(Admin 3)

Admin 3 further explained that as one of the co-curricular pieces of Program 3, the mentor program helps in various ways. First, it provides students with a person from another department as a dedicated resource as they navigate their undergraduate experience. Second, meetings with the mentors aids Admin 3 with learning about areas of interest the students have as far as topics of discussion for a program or interest in conducting research. These meetings also inform Admin 3 of any concerns the students may be experiencing regarding difficulty with coursework or feeling homesick. Lastly, the practice of mentoring in Program 3 may have bi-directional benefits. First, the mentoring in the program brings faculty from the university into regular contact with Black males who are not student-athletes. Second, the students from Program 3 interact
with professors they may or may not be familiar with from other areas of the campus. Therefore, it appears that the mentoring practice of Program 3 could be diversifying the type of relationships that are being developed within the institution inside and outside of Program 3.

The next essential practice of the program is general meetings that Admin 3 has with the participants. During these bi-weekly, mandatory meetings, Admin 3 dedicates the first half of the meetings for updates on various deadlines participants need to meet for Program 3 requirements (e.g. study hall hours, community service, etc.) and the academic deadlines enforced by the university that may be approaching. Admin 3 shared that the second half of the meeting is either academically or professionally focused workshop:

“...It could be academically focused, it can be professionally focused, it can be career focused, different things like that. That general meeting happens every other week, it gives us an opportunity to make sure that we're investing in them, some type of skill, helping them to develop some type of skill. Whether it be a leadership or professional skill, to help aid them in achieving their goals.” (Admin 3)

Admin 3 emphasized how constant engagement with the students is an intentional trait of the program which holds the students accountable to the expectations of Program 3 and the university and supports their academic success. Additionally, coming together as a group every other week keeps the community well connected in the midst of managing coursework and extracurricular activities. It appears that the meetings also serve as a space where the students can set goals and learn how to develop as leaders on and off campus.
Cultural immersion trips are some ways Program 3 contributes to students’ identity development as Black men, educates them on African American/Black American history, and connects them with networks of support outside of their campus:

“...For the last couple of years, we've been able to fully fund an opportunity to take guys to various locations within the eastern part of the United States. We've done a trip to Atlanta two years ago, last year we did a trip to D.C., and so this gives us an opportunity to visit local HBCUs in those areas, learn about student activism, learn about some of the opportunities that those schools offer. For example, when we went to D.C. we went to the Howard Law School and was able to get a couple of the guys connected with faculty within the Law Program to take on opportunities there. I was also able to finagle getting into the Black History Museum in D.C. and that was a really impactful experience for our guys because it gave so much information on slavery that you literally have to go through that museum five or six times to begin retaining some of the stuff. We really wanted to give them an opportunity to learn about their history, where they come from, and different things like that.”

(Admin 3)

The off-campus trips are times to bond as a group socially for the students and with Admin 3. Admin 3 appreciates this time when the young men can experience getting to know him on a more personal level but also allows time for the students to learn about the history of Black people that is being more accurately conveyed through museums located in more diverse cities. Admin 3 believes experiences like these help the students understand where they come from historically and culturally which adds to their identity development as young Black men. Additionally, the off-campus experiences also include visiting other PWIs that have programs similar to Program 3. For example, Admin 3 and the students had a trip to institutions located in Virginia and Ohio where they attended symposiums focusing on the Black male college experience. The students were able to attend presentations and engage with some guest speakers. The professional
development and networking experiences are another way the cultural emersion trips have added to the students’ leadership development.

The last major component of Program 3 is the academic support and experiences it provides the students. Program 3 provides academic workshops that offer study skill tips, a required course on leadership in the African American/Black community, and a study hall initiative the program provides. The course is instructed by a lecturer from the Humanities and Social Sciences department focusing on the dynamic of leadership in the Black community. Currently, Admin 3 is reevaluating how to enhance the resources and academic support the program offers the participants. One way he is working to improve the academic support is to develop partnerships with the different schools and colleges a points of contact and to have a liaison work with the men in Program 3 who may need additional support academically. Cross campus collaborations such as these appear to be helpful to Admin 3 and the students. Admin 3 expressed how having relationships with other on-campus departments and entities helps the program grow and function at a more effective level as far as supporting the students’ academically and socially. Additionally, these relationships also provide campus partners to work with a population of students that they may not interact with often because of the limited number of Black males on the campus.

Outside of the core components of Program 3 aforementioned, Admin 3 shared that while Program 3 provides intentionally focused programming and experiences for the students, he also encourages and promotes university-sponsored events and workshops that may contribute to growth and success. These supplemental programming may include professional development and career planning, graduate school workshops,
and/or community service projects. Similar to Programs 1 and 2, Program 3 also hosts an end of the year banquet for the students. The banquet is structured to highlight the students’ experiences in the living and learning community of Program 3. Unlike Programs 1 and 2’s banquet, Program 3’s banquet is a space where the students can share their experiences and come together as a community rather than an opportunity to recognize certain students with awards and honors:

“... at the end of the year banquet we give the men an opportunity to pair up in groups and give them five to seven minutes to talk about their experience in the [name of Program 3] over the course of the year. We invite our higher ups, I invite my Social Director, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs comes, and different stake holders come. We give them the opportunity to hear from the guys themselves in terms of the impact that they have within the program. The last time we had that it was like, it was like you should have had the tissues out, my Director was super impressed, her boss was super impressed with the way the guys were able to articulate their experiences and what they were gaining from this experience, and really compared to the experience that their peers are having. It's completely different. It’s kind of added value to the program.” (Admin 3)

Admin 3 further stressed that the university partners and senior leadership who attend the banquets are emotionally affected by the students’ narratives. As a result of the banquet, campus partners have shown continued support by co-sponsoring programming and collaborating with Program 3 and have helped to highlight and promote Program 3’s success through university-wide outlets. These relationships with the university community have helped promote and sustain Program 3 throughout the campus as well as diversified cross-campus collaborations with university departments.

**Program participants.** The students interviewed from Program 3 have either participated in the program as Resident Assistants (RAs), peer mentors, and/or members of the leadership team for programming. The first student interviewed from Program 3,
Student 1.3, is entering his junior year as a resident assistant and has also been a mentor in the program. Reflecting back on his time in the program, Student 1.3 credits being a participant in Program 3 for a successful transition to college as well as for the leadership opportunities he has obtained (e.g. mentor and RA):

“...my first year was really great and I was lucky enough to be offered leadership positions in my sophomore year, so I was a mentor in the program and then later a resident advisor. And why that came is most of the leaders [referring to Admin 3 and the Community Director] in the program worked for housing, so they were able to lead me to those opportunities. So, I would say some of my successes that I’ve been most fortunate with have been my adjustment from my high school, which was viewed as a lower level high school, to [name of university] which is a pretty difficult university was pretty swift. And there’s no way it would have been that way without [name of Program 3].” (Student 1.3)

Student 1.3 shared how his involvement with Program 3 has contributed to his success socially as well as academically. He further explained that when a student becomes a part of Program 3, there is a culture of accountability and encouragement that participants are surrounded by that motivates them to work hard academically:

“...Having things such as study halls and people older than you that are on your back that won’t let you just sit around lackadaisically. Sometimes they’ll [peers in Program 3] be dragging you out of areas to go study when they know you have tests and things like that. It helped motivate me and it helped me to build this space because I never had it previously. And that's something I've looked into doing this year, especially with the freshman that we have now. I know a lot of people say you have to learn off of experience, well that's true, but when someone who has that experience can tell you what studying can do, even for an extra hour or whatever, on test, learning from their experience alone can help you to do better.” (Student 1.3)

The support that Student 1.3 has received from being a participant in the program has encouraged him to be proactive with mentoring younger students in the program. He expressed how the energy around Program 3 regarding promoting academic excellence encourages him and others in the program to help one another and put forth great effort
academically. Learning from one another is a quality he has appreciated while in the program.

His experience as an RA has allowed him to see how having a living and learning floor for specifically for Black males is received by other students who reside in the building. Student 1.3 explained there are about 45 students per floor and 22 of those students are Program 3 participants. He has observed different responses from other students to having an all-Black male community in the building:

“...So, there's definitely pros and cons. We have a lounge area that people will say is very, very Black in the sense, and you don't see that at [name of university]. But the reason it's that way is because at the beginning of the year you'll notice a lot more diversity, but eventually people start to venture out and I think a lot of that has to do with uncomfortableness of how free and how expressive the Black people in the building are. Cause it's not just [name of Program 3], of course we make up a large majority probably like 80 percent of the Black people there, but Black women are in the lounge as well, and it just becomes like a really Black area. And eventually people [referring to White residents] become uncomfortable, cause that's not what they expected when they came to [name of university]. I have seen that, but there also are people that have accepted it, who have embraced it, that aren't Black, necessarily, and that's been beautiful as well. Cause I know some of these people come from areas where they don't see people like us [Black people] and they've been able to interact with us and learn from our experience and learn from our culture. Even little things like playing spades. There are some people whose households never did anything like that and now we have a group full of White guys just sitting there and playing spades with us. That's just not something I ever expected at [name of university], but with [name of Program 3] those spaces have been created... They've been able to see what that experience is like and they can take it and participate in it.”

(Student 1.3)

Student 1.3 has witnessed the impact of having Program 3 as a living and learning community not only for the program participants but also for the other residents in the building. The organic interactions, such as playing cards in the lobby, appear to be a way students—Black and White, men and women--are experiencing a sense of community
with one another in a common space on campus. Creating a space for White students and Black students to diversify their experiences informally seems to be another way Program 3 benefits the institution by having positive effects on the social climate of the institution. Student 3.1 also shared that not all students welcome the idea of Program 3’s living and learning community:

“...I loved the idea of [name of Program 3]. Understanding that it [referring to Program 3] can be one of the very rare spaces at my PWI that is predominately Black was an idea that increased my interest in [name of Program 3]. I know some people have spoken about ... They'll talk to other people about the program, they'll say that we're self-segregating or things like that, but I think that's based on ignorance because we need those spaces because we can't find them anywhere else at [name of university].” (Student 1.3)

Being a Black male on his campus, Student 1.3 stated there are not many spaces on campus where Black males or students can bond as a community and feel a sense of belonging. Student 1.3 values the space Program 3 provides him and his peers. During his time at his university, one space in particular where Student 1.3 experiences a lack of community and sense of belonging is in the classroom. He explained the difference between his experiences in transitioning from a majority Black high school to a majority White college:

“...I would say with my peers, when I was in high school there was definitely a lot more assistance between one another from the get go, so we had all come in with the mind set of we're all together, we're trying to get these A's, let's work together to do it. I noticed that people do do that in college, but not necessarily with me. So, I'm kind of left out the loop until you get that first test grade back and then they [referring to his White peers] kind of see your grade is like pretty high, and they're like, "Hey, we have this group chat, wanna join?" And you'll see threads from like weeks and weeks. I'm like why would I join this now, just cause I'm doing good? You didn't expect anything of me before. So, people don't just naturally think you'll be good at anything, you have to prove to them you're good, even though you all got in that same university. So, in classrooms, that's a big thing.” (Student 1.3)
Therefore, in a space where Student 1.3 is expected to interact and work with his peers academically, he has noticed, as a Black male on his campus, that there is an inherent hesitation to work with him or include him in group work. Although this has not deterred him from working hard academically, it is something he has noticed often with his White peers and to some extent he has noticed it with his professors:

“...I know another thing with my professors. It's a very big school, so I mostly interact with TA's, but with the professors that I do interact with, they're definitely ... I guess experiences are different, so there's kind of a divide in that sense. But I've had a lot of professors help me recommendation letters wise and things of that nature. I've just learned that I have to go out and get it. Like just little things. I don't think any professor, um, well, most professors come from ... I don't know how to say this. Our way of getting there is kind of different cause I feel like I had to prove myself more versus when they interact with other students, they see it as like a smooth transition. So, there's a divide in how, maybe I come off as aggressive sometimes with things like that versus other students. It's something I have felt like...(pauses) I have to just be that way based on what I see and experience in class. I notice I'm one of four of five Black people in the classroom, I know everyone else notices that as well. And I know that people come in with misconceptions about Black people and that's the reality of most PWI's.” (Student 1.3)

Although, the classroom environment in which Student 1.3 attempts to engage academically with his peers poses its challenges, he remains determined to seek assistance from his professors and put forth the effort to excel in his courses. Student 1.3 shared that as a Black male at a PWI the noticeably challenging environment is something he has just come to expect and is grateful for the connections he has made in Program 3 which have provided support and a sense of belonging.

When asked what the most beneficial aspect of Program 3 has been for him, Student 1.3 did not hesitate with his response:

“...The most beneficial component has been the connections I've made with my fellow students, even though we're not necessarily the same
majors or things like that, just having them around to help me understand that I'm not going through this alone have been magnificent. I would say most of my friends at [name of university] have come through the [name of Program 3] or have come through people who know the people in the [name of Program 3] and then after that you build connections that way. But definitely that's probably been the biggest thing for me. And it maybe doesn't sound as important to a lot of people because they're like, "You're just there for school." But there's a lot of power in the people you hang around, and the people you hang around often influence what you do and hanging around people who are so motivated to do well in life has helped me to have that same motivation." (Student 1.3)

The relationships Student 1.3 has found through Program 3 and developed with campus partners has greatly impacted his experience at the university. It appears that if Student 1.3 had not been a part of Program 3, he may have not felt well-connected and supported by a community of Black students and he may have had difficulty navigating the university:

“...I tell people this all the time. I would not be at [name of university] if [Program 3] wasn't at [name of the university]. There's no way. I would have transferred pretty quickly. I say I love this school, but it's really a big asterisk because I don't think I would without [name of Program 3]. That's how important it's been to me. So yeah. There's no way I'd be at [name of the university]. I don't know what school I'd transfer to. I don't know if it'd be an HBCU or to like [name of another prominent college in North Carolina] or something, but there's no way I'd be at [name of the university]. I just don't feel like it's welcoming. I just don't feel like the general population appreciates what people in my demographic bring, but with [name of Program 3] around you have individuals that do. You can see and seek out faculty that do support different programs that help people in my demographic. But without that, there's no way. There's no way. I would not be at [name of the university]." (Student 1.3)

According to Student 1.3, it seems evident that without Program 3, Student 1.3 believes that he would not have had the opportunity to build significant connections with other Black males, faculty, and administrators from the university. It is clear that Program 3’s existence is a primary factor of why Student 1.3 has remained at the university to complete his undergraduate career.
Similar to Programs 1 and 2, Program 3 also has an African/American/Black woman closely involved with the program. This young woman is the graduate Resident Director for Program 3 and interacts regularly with the students. Student 1.3 reflected on how having a Black female in this role compared to having a White female in the graduate Resident Director role, which the program has had in the past:

“... I think having a Black woman is very, very important for [Program 3] because people [referring to students in the program] are forced to think twice about their rhetoric and the things that we say. Some of the misogynistic, tone deaf type things that people say, they got to think twice about it. And she [referring to Black graduate Resident Director] can help people to understand flaws in their logic and things of that nature. But I know my first year here we didn't have a Black woman there. We had a White woman who assisted with our program, and she was great but there's just power in having a Black woman associated with the program like that. Because you think of her as like a sister, you think of her as someone you don’t want to disrespect, someone that can help challenge your views even if they're problematic. I don’t know, there was just a difference in having a Black woman there versus a White woman. Like nobody would go into her office and just sit down. That was unheard of. Cause, I mean, she was great, but there was a different level of comfort. So, everyone goes into [name of Black graduate Resident Director] office. And will sit down, even though she keeps the heat very high for some reason (laughs). We always sit down in there and we can all talk to her and feel comfortable in the things we say to her. She's even in our group chats. Like it's just different.” (Student 1.3)

According to Student 1.3, there seems to be an apparent level of trust and comfort he has experienced with the current Graduate Resident Director who is a Black woman versus the Graduate Resident Director from past years, who was a White woman. With the Black woman, Student 1.3 explained there is a strong of sense familiarity when he interacts with her, similar to a relationship with a sibling, whereas with the White woman, he thought she was helpful and interacted with her, but he did not feel completely comfortable to approach her.
Finally, when I asked Student 1.3, if he could add another component to Program 3, he suggested Black professionals:

“...I would say we all get a mentor, a Black mentor, in the field that we would like to go into. And we keep them for all four years... Well, I guess people change majors so maybe that wouldn't work. But something like that because having Black professionals in the field that you want to be in can help that idea seem more realistic because you know that someone that looks like you, probably comes from the same type of background as you, and someone that you can just be very frank with and honest with. Someone interested in inspiring students of color, I would say it's a good idea. I think that would be huge for the guys in the building.” (Student 1.3)

According to Student 1.3, having a Black professional as a mentor would be a significant addition to the program for the young men. It appears that having a Black mentor could provide a trusting relationship the young men could rely on to help them plan goals as future young professionals.

Student 2.3, a native of North Carolina, is a junior who has been involved with Program 3 for over 2 years. When he was introduced to the program, it had not been established as a living and learning community. His first introduction was attending a social gathering that was hosted by the African American Male Initiative. During the earlier part of his undergraduate experience he attended various events hosted by the program. When he learned about the program becoming one of the university’s living and learning communities, he thought it would be a great experience to be a part of:

“...Yeah, so I thought it [Program 3] was good for us to have that community [referring to an all-Black male living and learning community] and we [Black men on campus] definitely need it. It's for when stuff goes down on campus or in America really, that we need to talk about ... We don't have to worry about someone being twenty minutes across campus just to talk about it, we can just go meet up in the lounge on our floor, that's a five step walk or whatever.” (Student 2.3)
Student 2.3 thought Program 3 was a necessary concept for Black males on campus. One of the situations that encouraged him to join the program was the idea of having one another in close proximity. Participating in Program 3 has been an opportunity to provide moral support for one another when relative issues or concerns occur on campus or in society, such as, the last presidential election:

“...The biggest one that really comes to mind was election night. Election night was pretty tough for a lot of the guys including me, and we were watching the numbers come in in the lounge and it wasn't just us, right? It was the [name of Program 3] guys were there, some White guys were there, some White girls, you know. Everyone was there. And just some people, there were some Trump supporters there so we kind of needed our own space to think about what was happening, kind of talk it through. Honestly there wasn't a lot of talking on election night because it was just that shock (pauses) ... like so many people were for this and for him. So, we had that moment, and then the next day sort of like an impromptu thing, just whoever was watching it, whoever was around we were just there for each other, talking through it. There were some people outside who were watching it who were saying things that upset a few of us, and we needed the community, the trust to kind of say like, "Hey, hey, calm down. Let's not get in trouble or anything like that. Let's go somewhere else and watch this and deal with this." And the next day, the leader [referring to Admin 3] of the [name of Program 3] kind of said, "Alright, now everyone come together. Let's talk about this and figure out what we need to do to make sure that we're all right, and that it doesn't impact what's happening now, what's going to be happening for the next four years doesn't impact who you are as a student and your success in your life." (Student 2.3)

From the data, Student 2.3 explained how Program 3 has provided moral support for him and his peers during a challenging time. It also shows how Admin 3 brings the young men together as a community to process emotions and not let a life-altering experience prevent them from moving forward. Furthermore, it appears that having the program is a reminder for the participants that they are not alone and can look to one another for support during difficult times.

Student 2.3 shared how Program 3 is perceived by other students on campus:
“...And how I think it's received around campus is it's kind of (pauses) ... People kind of think it's weird at first, and then they come over and see it and they notice we're not just sheltered off to ourselves within the dorm. Now we have one and a half floors, but there's still some 30 other floors there, and we interact with everyone. So, it's not like we're really segregating ourselves. There are a lot of people of difference races that we're hanging out with.”  (Student 2.3)

According to Student 2.3 it appears that the idea of an all-Black male living and learning community is unusual for other students to experience. However, once other students from campus are able to see that Program 3 participants interact with students from all backgrounds in the building, it seems as though, the program is accepted just like any of the other living and learning communities.

Functioning in a majority White environment is not unfamiliar for Student 2.3. He grew up in a predominantly White neighborhood and attended majority White schools. During his sophomore year, Student 2.3 began to notice there were instances on campus when he felt like he was being treated differently because he was Black:

“...My class size is probably much smaller, maybe 100 people and I'll be one of five if I'm lucky. And then my professors are usually not Black. I don't think I've had...(pauses) I haven't had a single Black engineering professor yet. For the most part my class room experiences, have gotten better. But I definitely, on the first day of class, I used to see people avoiding sitting next to me, I believe it's because of my skin color because I don't know what else it would be. I could definitely see people avoid ... Like I'd sit down in a lecture hall or even at a table or something like that and then the two seats next to me will be empty until the last few minutes of class. The campus buses here...it's the same thing on the buses. People will start to stand before they sit next to me. I mean again, hey that's cool (shrugs). I mean, I'm fine with not having anyone next to me. But it's just like, yeah okay, so. I just picked up on it after a while. I didn't notice it my first semester, I thought maybe I was just weird (laughs). I don't mind it, like I don't mind someone next to me. But my eyes weren't really open to the reason that it could be happening until probably my sophomore year. I think, honestly it was probably because of [Program 3] and the guys and I've been meeting with and you know stuff maybe they've been saying about their experiences, and I was like, "That happened to me too.”  (Student 2.3)
Student 2.3 learned his peers from Program 3 were had similar experiences of isolation which confirmed that it was not just because it was him, it was because he was Black. It appears, once Student 2.3 realized his feelings were validated by his peers, he did not allow the isolation to affect his academic persistence.

Program 3 has significantly impacted Student 2.3 socially. He shared how the program has provided him the opportunity to interact and relate with Black community:

“...One big way the [name of the program] helped me has been socially, because growing up I was very fortunate to live in a very nice neighborhood. But this very nice neighborhood was also predominately White, actually it was all White but my family. And then elementary school I went to a magnet school that I think I had four Black friends, and then middle school, high school, essentially the same thing. So, I definitely needed ... I always felt like (pauses); I just wasn't connected to the Black community. I wasn't a part of it because I never really had that experience. So, I mean, now the majority of my friends are African American or have some sort of African American background or something like that. So I feel that my friend group is still diversified, but I feel more connected to the Black community now and I owe all that to [name of Program 3].” (Student 2.3)

Similar to some of the students from Programs 1 and 2, Student 2.3 admitted, not having Program 3 at his university would be a challenge:

“Well, (hmm) ... Without [name of Program 3]...(pauses) I definitely would say I'd be struggling a lot more than I am. I probably wouldn't feel as comfortable around campus... I don't know if I'd have that tight-knit community that I have right now. I'd probably still be looking for it, because I don't know. There's really nothing, other than maybe Greek organizations, there's nothing else around like [name of Program 3] at the [name of the university].” (Student 2.3)

Feelings of isolation are apparently evident for Black males on this campus. According to Student 2.3, having Program 3 has helped him feel more connected and a part of a Black community. Program 3 could be a bridge that keeps the Black males on campus
feel like they have a space and community of support exclusively for them outside of other Black student organizations (e.g. Greek letter organizations).

Finally, the last interview for this study was with a senior who is also a Resident Assistant assigned to the Black male living and learning community [Program 3]. Student 3.3 began by sharing what encouraged him to join Program 3 and how the program has been helpful to him:

“... I saw it as a great opportunity to meet new people like me and make more connections. [Program 3] like prepares you for life basically. Like I feel like I've learned a lot of skills that I'll be able to take into the real world when I'm out of college on my own. I would say more for me, they helped me with the social aspect because I've always been good academically. Whenever we had study halls or maybe workshops for academics, I was like I know how to do this. I'm usually an introvert, so being in an environment where it helps me open up, or a safe space in a way for me to speak my mind and share my opinions. That's really the skill that I say I've gained the most with [Program 3]. But they've also helped professionally with resume workshops, bringing in speakers to help guide us as Black men in the world that may not have necessarily been built for us.” (Student 3.3)

According to the data, Student 3.3 seems to have become more comfortable with expressing himself because of the supportive environment Program 3 provides Black males. Outside of some social skills he has acquired, Program 3 has also provided Student 3.3 with professional resources that may help prepare for his future.

When Student 3.3 referenced Program 3 being a “safe space,” he was describing having a place to talk. He further elaborated on the types of things the participants talk about:

“... we talk about pretty much anything from sports to politics to how to go through a day life at college. It honestly depends on who I'm talking to. But some people, some of the younger freshmen, they may need help with how I do this, or where can I go for this. It's more of a conversation on how they can develop or use some of the challenges I've had, some of the successes to help them do better and succeed. Some of the members that I
Program 3 appears to be an outlet where the students can have dialogue and learn from one another by sharing experiences. Additionally, being able to have a safe space to talk with one another could show evidence of how Program 3 may be supporting the well-being of students. According to Student 3.3, described well-being as having other people to talk. He also shared how he has found a variety of support for his well-being as a participant in Program 3:

“...At least for me, being able to have people to talk to, being able to actually have my opinions heard and thoughts heard all helps with my well-being. I think with [name of Program 3] especially, we have people that we're able to get close to and able to do things with. Like some people, I can go do homework with, while some I can go to the gym with, some I just talk. But I think all of these aspects from being in the program have helped me be able to not be so stressed or be relieved in an environment where you're basically on a White campus ...college is hard. And so, the program, just, it just gives me kind of a space I can step into when I'm away from doing homework or job to, go to just to relax. We really get to share our experiences and hear not only what other people go through, but also, kind of get to share our stories and see that we're not alone.” (Student 3.3)

It appears that Program 3 provides Student 3.3. a community of peers that is supportive academically, socially, and emotionally. He admitted that having this type of support form Program 3 has helped him to not feel isolated and manage the stress that can come from being on a predominantly White campus as a Black man.
In Student 3.3’s classes, he is usually one of few, if not the only, Black student.

He shared how being one of a few Black students in his classes affects him:

“...I say in textile engineering, there are very few people of color. I say I'm one of maybe three or four Black people in my class, and then last semester, I knew one of them was on study abroad, so it was me and one of my good friends. So, it was me and her [Black female student], and I was the only Black male in the class. For me, I feel like class is very organized and focused, so I'm there to learn. It doesn't really affect me that I may be the only Black male. I'm still going to go into the class and perform the way I know how to with the ability that I have. I would say mentally though, when I look around, it's like you have no one to go to or ask questions. So, when I say, I look for a mentor in my field, it's kind of hard because all my professors are White males. I can go talk to them about things because they're great people, but they don't know the difference in what I go through. I feel like the way people [referring to White people] perceive you is different. I feel like sometimes, I get the vibe that people don't expect as much from me, just because I'm a Black male, compared to a White female or White male. Also, you'll get subtle glimpses of things that teachers will say because of stereotypical things. I remember one time, my professor was talking about basketball, and he happened to look at me.” (Student 3.3)

Despite the fact that Student 3.3 admitted being the only Black male in his classes does not affect him, he has noticed that not having other Black peers or professors limits his options of who he can connect with as a Black man. It seems as though, Student 3.3 desires Black professors (e.g. mentors). With his White professors, he senses a difference in how his academic abilities are viewed in comparison to his White peers.

Student 3.3. further elaborated on why it is important to have Black professors, mentors, and peers to interact with in college:

“...For me, it’s motivation. It's a big thing to see other Black people like mentors, professors, and other students (pauses) like someone in a place that you want to go...and they look like you, so you know that you're capable of it, and you can do it yourself. And it's like knowing that they're capable of that and knowing that they also look like me is that driving force that that could be me one day. Seeing myself in their shoes is easier when they look like me.” (Student 3.3)
Student 3.3 believes that interacting with other Black mentors, professors, and students is encouraging. It seems as though having more Black people to emulate on his campus could help him continue to strive for his personal and professional goals.

Finally, Student 3.3 concluded the interview with his thoughts on what PWIs need to know and understand to support the Black males interested in attending their universities:

“...Definitely providing that space for people of color to connect with each other. Not saying that all people of color are the same, but when you're able to find people that are like you and that also look like you helps. And then also, just treating us like any other student. We're all here. We're all paying the same money. So just making sure that your campus environment is inclusive and diverse, making sure that if you have outlets for students, that they're not discriminating against race, sexuality, color, anything like that. And just having, I guess the opportunities, that you allow to everyone are open to everyone.” (Student 3.3)

Therefore the data reveals, Student 3.3 believes PWIs should provide a more welcoming environment for all students. Additionally, students of color need to feel like a part of an inclusive campus community with access to resources and spaces where they can relate to one another.

Themes. Program 3 appears to focus on creating a sense of community and belonging for its participants. As a living and learning community, the program seems to provide a safe space where the students can discuss and process issues or concerns with one another. For example, the students interviewed from Program 3 shared several instances when they have felt isolated and to some extent ignored in their classes. It appears as though the students are able to receive support for their emotional well-being in Program 3.
Under the leadership of Admin 3, Program 3 emphasizes the importance of making connections. Some of these connections have been through academic support (e.g. study hall sessions), peer mentoring, and/or a leadership opportunity (e.g. becoming RAs). As the students participate in Program 3, they have shared some of the negative encounters they have experienced on campus, which according to the data, has been a reminder for them that they are not alone and can rely on one another. Additionally, Program 3 has been intentional with collaborating with campus partners. Working with other departments (e.g. Academic Resource Center) and faculty, has appeared to provide the students access to additional academic and professional resources. Additionally, by partnering with other members of the campus, the program has been able to introduce other departments and faculty to a group of young Black men with whom they may not typically interact with on a regular basis. Therefore, these cross-campus collaborations are serving two purposes that may benefit Program 3’s students as well as members of the campus community.

**Cross-case analysis**

Following the analysis of each case (e.g. programs), this section will include the cross-case analysis of all three programs of this study. According to (Merriam, 1998, p.195) “…once the analysis of each case is completed, cross-case analysis begins. A qualitative, inductive, multi-case study seeks to build abstractions across cases.” During the cross-case analysis, I will first describe the commonalities, themes, and or differences that emerged from the interviews and documents analyzed across all three programs in this study. Next, I will summarize three themes that emerged from the cross-case analysis: *developing meaningful relationships, building a sense of community, and*
networks of support. Finally, I will provide an explanation of the core category of developing community relationships, that emerged from the data.

Glaser and Strauss’ (2017) grounded theory approach of constant comparison and outlined five key purposes: (1) accuracy, (2) to provide overview of facts, (3) to explain the significant details of a case, (4) to test theory, and (5) to generate theory. The cross-case analysis for this study revealed twelve groups/families that emerged across the three programs’ participants in the study: community, relationships, well-being, belonging, identity, life skills, gender influence, mentoring/leadership, involvement, academic achievement, support/resources, and creating experiences. The groups/families for this study are defined in Table 3.

Table 3. Meanings of groups/families as defined by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups/Categories</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Seeking/wanting a community; giving back to the community; importance of having a Black community to connect with; building a community; a safe space; a network; non-existent Black community; lack of Black faculty community; creating community relations with other (e.g. White) students; campus community Black; campus community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Developing interpersonal relationships; institutional relationships; peer to peer: faculty: relationships developed inside and outside the program; collaborations; partnerships; need for relationships with Black faculty; wanting or lacking relationships with peers; Black male and Black female on campus elations; Black and White student on campus relations; seeking/wanting relationships with Black faculty; connecting with the Black community; cross campus collaborations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Influence</td>
<td>Interactions with and feelings about having a Black female administrator in the program; gender roles; Black female experience vs Black male experience; Black female dynamic with Black males; topics of discussion; differences between interactions/relationship with male administrator and female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
administrator; impact of having a female closely connected with the program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Well-being</th>
<th>Expressing and processing emotions; poor on campus counseling resources; talking to and/or having someone to talk to; coping with stress; self-care; knowing who you are; having a voice; working out; going to church and/or prayer/faith</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Sense of belonging; feeling connected/welcome; not feeling welcomed or liked; vibe of the program; feeling isolated, excluded; inclusion; welcoming spaces; lack of connection with peers, faculty, and/or the campus; feeling a part of something; feeling valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>“Who am I as a Black man?”; what it means to be a Black man at a PWI and/or in society; hypermasculinity; what institutions are or are not doing to support efforts geared toward Black male identity development; embodiment; program aim; sexual orientation; having a voice/role; program’s components focusing on identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life skills</td>
<td>Person and professional development; growth; learning how to prioritize; making important decisions; lessons learned; independence; planning for the future; learning how to be a leader in the Black community and/or on campus; learning how to be a man; passing down/sharing knowledge with one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring/Leadership</td>
<td>Program component; peer to peer; faculty to student; alumni to student; modeling; program expectation/requirement; importance of mentors for Black males; mentor relationships forming organically; having leaders; becoming leaders; developing leadership skills; leadership opportunities that stem from participation in the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>How involved the program is with tracking students; ways to engage and get involved with Black males; types of involvement/engagement; exposing participants to Black history/culture with off campus activities/experiences; opportunities; campus activities; leadership positions; Black males lack of interest/sustaining interest in getting involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>Program standards and expectations of programs; G.P.A.; something the program tracks/outcomes; good grades; balancing academics and extracurricular activities; obtaining the job you desire; graduation and retention rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/Resources</td>
<td>Type of support that is needed/missing from the program and/or working vs. not working; student needs; types of support/resources program and campus provides; access to academic resources; connections; supportive networks and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mentors; resources White students have vs Black students; limited resources; learning outcomes to gauge program needs/resources; wish list of resources; Black males supporting one another; assessing resources

| Creating experiences | Recognition; developing the program; engaging with the Black alumni network; modeling; collaborating across campus; programs/workshops/events; including Black history in programming; cultural exposure experiences; living and learning communities |

Groups/Categories

Community and relationships. Each participant in this study emphasized the importance of Black males having a sense of community to connect with on predominantly White campuses. The administrators explained that outside of Black student organizations (e.g. Greek letter organizations, etc.), Black males on their campuses had limited exposure to other Black students and faculty. Although the main goal for the existence of these programs is to help improve graduation and retention rates of Black males at their universities, the initial reason the ideas of the programs came about was because Black male students felt their campuses were lacking a sense of community for them.

The programs in this study appear to value community and provide programs which bring students together academically and socially. The administrators also emphasized that the students being heavily engaged in the programs results in the students becoming more involved with the campus community. Whether the students from this study were taking on a leadership role within the program as a mentor, studying together, or spending time together socially, they felt a sense of community and brotherhood that formed over time. Most of the students in this study described the programs as a “tight-knit community,” and one student even compared it to a “small
Black church.” All of the students openly shared that without their respective programs, they would have struggled with adjusting to campus, finding resources for Black students, and meeting other Black males.

As the administrators from this study describe “creating a space” for Black males to excel academically and develop into leaders, there was also evidence of the programs serving as a community that offered emotional support during challenging times. For example, a few of the students in this study referenced the election of Trump and the senseless police brutality against Black men in society as times when they came together to support one another and to process their emotions.

The students interviewed for this study recognized how the programs have helped them to build relationships in different ways. At first, most of the students admitted to the struggle they endured trying to find other Black males on campus. After joining the programs, they were able to connect and relate with other Black males which helped with adjusting to a predominantly White campus. It was both stated by the administrators that the programs were intentionally established to not only increase graduation and retention of Black males but to also provide an environment where they can build supportive relationships with one another. They shared how the students encouraged one another academically when they studied together and provided insight about classes and professors. Additionally, all of the students mentioned they valued the relationships they have with the administrators of the programs, specifically the Black female administrators. Finding a trusting and reliable community of people in the programs, appears to have helped the students academically, socially, and emotionally.
Gender influence. One unexpected finding from this study was the influence the Black female administrator and/or staff involved with the programs seemed to have on the participants. It seemed as though the young men had a good rapport with the male administrators as far as feeling as though they could go to them if they needed guidance but with the Black female administrators/staff, the students expressed a deeper level of vulnerability and responsibility. A few students from the Programs 1 and 2 even compared the women administrators to being like members of their family: “she’s like my auntie or big sister…she don’t play, but she looks out for us.”

Additionally, all of the students were clear that they “didn’t want to disappoint” the female administrators and learned a lot from them. For example, during some day to day interactions, the participants from Program 1 mentioned how the Program Coordinator (a Black woman) would teach them and “check” them on how to refer to women in a respectful manner and build healthy relationships with women. The students from this study appeared to have a deep amount of gratitude and trust for the Black women involved with the programs. Program 3 had a White woman and a Black woman work with the program in the same role at different times. The students who were there to interact with both, clearly stated that they were more comfortable approaching the Black woman staff member than they were with the White woman. Overall, the students in Programs 1 and 2 were clear not to discredit the male administrators’ roles but were very clear about how helpful the Black women administrators had been academically, professionally, and personally.

Well-Being, belonging, and identity. The groups of well-being (e.g. emotional support and self-care), belonging, and identity appear to be closely related. The overall
well-being of the students appears to be an important objective of the programs as well as a significant outcome for the students. In speaking to the administrators, they described how they see some of the young men connect with their peers on a more personal level, offering emotional support. For example, during a leadership retreat Program 1 hosted, one participant of the program “came out” as a gay man. The student went on to describe the emotional struggles he was facing but felt comfortable enough to disclose his identifying as a Black, gay man. As his peers listened to him intently, they all surrounded him and stated, “we are here for you,” embracing him and standing in prayer together.

In the other two programs, examples of emotional support ranged from the students encouraging one another academically to bonding on a spiritual level (e.g. going to church together and praying for one another). In all three programs, the students mentioned several instances of “having someone to talk to,” about challenging situations (e.g. feelings of isolation in their classes and coping with stress) was a personal benefit of being in the programs. Admin 2 described Program 2 as “intentionally relational.” She characterized the emotional support the Black males in Program 2 provide one another as a sense of “brotherhood” that keeps them closely connected to one another and resonates throughout the program.

Sense of belonging was repeatedly referenced across all three programs. In some ways, sense of belonging was used to describe an aim of the programs by administrators. However, for the students, it was often utilized to describe what they were lacking in their classroom experiences. The students expressed how they felt well-connected and a part of “something,” in the programs. Admin 2 mentioned how Program 2 aimed for
their students to feel that they were valued and “understood they belonged and are a part of the larger initiative,” meaning the institution. Each student participants of this study, shared examples of feeling excluded from group projects and conversations in their classes. They also stated how their professors were helpful, but they had a desire for interacting with Black faculty because they would be “someone that understood them more and could talk to more easily.” The program settings appear to be welcoming environments where the students admitted they feel as though they “belong,” and have a “voice” to share their perspectives openly.

Closely associated with the students’ well-being was identity; this theme emerged in different ways for the programs. Each program referenced one major point of focus for the programs is identity for Black males. In particular, Admin 1 and Admin 3 commented on the hypermasculinity a lot of Black male students arrive with; the administrators both shared their desire to address gender stereotyping with the help of healthy dialogue, intentional programming, and beneficial networking with other Black male faculty and professionals.

However, Admin 2’s aim was to promote the importance of Black male identity development with her students. She emphasized the significance of the students asking themselves, “who am I as a Black man?” and “What does it mean to be a Black man at a PWI?” Additionally, Admin 2 stressed the “embodiment” of Black men and the various roles they can occupy not only on campus as leaders but also as professionals in society. The majority of Program 2’s events included Black faculty, the executive director (a Black man), or the students themselves leading workshops. It appears that while promoting the importance of Black male identity development with the students, all three
programs aspire for the campus community to see Black males as multi-faceted young
men and high-achieving students who occupy leadership roles, such as RAs, campus
ambassadors, and mentors.

**Life skills.** All of the students from this study shared that they have grown
personally and professionally from participating in these programs. In some instances,
the students referenced how the programs helped them learn to balance the academic and
social aspects of college. The upperclassmen from the study credited the programs with
helping them plan and prepare for after college by connecting them with professionals
from their disciplines, whereas the younger students in the programs shared that they
learned a lot from the knowledge the upperclassmen mentors passed along to them.
Learning how to “be a leader” was heavily emphasized across all three programs. All of
the administrators promoted the importance of Black men being leaders on campus as
well as in the Black community by sponsoring specific events. It seems as though being
around other Black students and networking with Black professionals and faculty, was
encouraging for the students.

**Mentoring/leadership, and involvement.** The mentoring/leadership category is
deeply rooted in the mission of all three programs and appears to be a key factor that has
influence on the students’ level of campus involvement. Each of the programs includes a
peer to peer mentoring component which provides the students an opportunity to occupy
some type of leadership role within the program. The upperclassmen in the study
mentioned how they enjoyed being a mentor to the incoming participants of the
programs. One student shared, “Becoming a peer mentor helped me learn how to be an
example for the younger students and share what I had learned to figure out this place
[the college].” For a couple of the younger students in the program, being a mentee was more associated with building relationships. Most of the students in the study mentioned that before joining the programs it was a struggle to find and meet other Black males. One student in Program 1 stated why he wanted a peer mentor: “…so I can get to know other Black males and make some friends.”

As students took on leadership roles in the programs as mentors or student assistants, they were introduced to other leadership opportunities outside of the program. These roles included becoming a Resident Assistant in Program 3’s living and learning community or a student assistant for Program 2. In these roles, the students were able to work closely with other campus partners and faculty. For example, as an RA in Program 3, the students would work with a faculty mentor to facilitate programming for the living and learning communities. Based on research on Black males in higher education, the administrators all recognize the importance of encouraging Black males to get involved and to become more engaged with the campus community. Therefore, the programs intentionally expose the students to opportunities (e.g. peer counselors/mentors, student assistants, RAs) where they can enhance their student involvement and leadership skills. As a result, the students who were fortunate to obtain these types of roles expressed their appreciation for the relationships that developed with other students and campus partners outside the program.

**Academic achievement and support/resources.** Academic achievement was defined differently by the students and the administrators. Most of the students associated academic achievement with their G.P.A and “getting good grades and doing well in what you’re studying.” Performing well in classes while balancing their
academics and extracurricular activities was another way academic achievement was described. One student associated academic achievement with “getting the job you want.” Students from the study recognized that being in the programs helped them with their academic successes and goals. For example, one student explained how just being a part of Program 1 helped “…build relationships with other Black males who want to do well in school…and that makes me want to do well.” Several of the students viewed their peers in the programs as supportive resources. Another student from Program 2 commented on how some of his friends in Program 2 had taken some of the classes he had to take, and it was helpful to talk through how to prepare for the classes or professors who taught the classes. A couple of upperclassmen for Program 1 and Program 3 shared that there were limited resources for Black males on majority White campuses. They stated the programs were helpful in connecting the students with academic resources early as they adjusted to campus-life. Outside of relationships the students developed from being in the programs, access to academic resources and support seems to be the next important benefit for the students.

In contrast, administrators’ definitions of academic achievement seemed more aligned with the institutional purpose of the programs: (1) to increase graduation and retention rates for Black males and (2) to provide support and resources that enhance the academic and social experiences for Black males. To support these programmatic aims, all of the administrators shared they are intentional in tracking the students’ academic progress and providing resources (e.g. tutors and/or study hall sessions) that may help the young men persist. Admin 2 described how including peer mentoring as a component of the programs is a way the students are being resources for one another academically and
socially. Additionally, the administrators from all of the programs referenced Black faculty and alumni as resources for the participants academically and professionally.

**Creating experiences.** The programs in this study attempted to create experiences that enriched Black males’ overall student experience with programming specific to their academic and social needs. In particular, Program 3 included cultural emersion trips to African American/Black museums and HBCUs. According to Admin 3, these trips were meant to reeducate the participants on the Black American experience, which many of the students were not familiar with. The students were able to speak with Black faculty and students from HBCUs and learn about a college experience different from their own.

Programs 1 and 2 also coordinated off campus activities for their students but appear to utilize their events and workshops to shape experiences for their participants. For example, the students from Program 2 have the opportunity to enhance their leadership skill by being a peer counselor for an early-arrival program, a peer mentor for the program, or as a student assistant for Admin 2. These roles all provide the students opportunities to interact with new and returning students and to lead events. Similarly, Program 1 had several students in this study to obtain the opportunity to implement and plan workshops covering various topics, such as a program focused around mental health awareness for Black men and another one that covered business etiquette and preparing a resume. Several of these opportunities that included implementing and executing an event encompassed collaborating with on campus partners provided the students and departments an opportunity to develop a working relationship.
Finally, all of the programs hosted a recognition event at the end of each year, acknowledging graduating seniors, student leaders, and peer mentors who excelled academically and/or in their respective roles. According to the administrators, these end of the year events were an opportunity for students to share their experiences with their peers and with campus partners. The recognition events also served as platforms to highlight the students’ and the programs’ success for the campus community.

**Learning outcomes and measures**

Various curricula and practices assist the administrators with measuring learning outcomes for the programs. Program 1 utilizes a tool called “Campus Labs,” to measure learning outcomes. Outside of academic performance, Admin 1 provided examples of programs from the curriculum which help to assess learning outcomes. Program 1’s Enrichment Week and a course offered to participants in the program are associated with specific learning outcomes. By the end of Enrichment Week, Admin 1 emphasized the importance of the students knowing where to locate specific academic resources such as the Academic Success Center, the Writing Center, and the library. The overall objective of the course is for the students to learn about Black racial identity development.

Each program included G.P.A as a metric, however, Program 2 appears to focus more heavily on academic achievement graduation, retention, and academic performance (Fan & Chan, 2001), which is a common characteristic of a grant-funded program. The outcomes for Program 2 include: a graduation and retention rate within 1% from the institution’s, meet or be on par with the average male G.P.A. performance, and to increase program participation by 20%.
Program 3 utilizes a curriculum map that outlines the program’s four pillars: navigational, aspirational, historical, and cultural. Under each pillar, Admin 3 explained, along with the Program Coordinator, they list specific learning outcomes for the participants. At the end of the first semester, the staff conduct focus groups and administer surveys to the students which allow them to assess which events or resources are most helpful to the students. Different from Programs 1 and 2, Program 3 utilizes an end of the year banquet as another way to measure learning outcomes. During this recognition event, students share their experiences in the program, successes, and challenges they have overcome with their peers and faculty and members of the university’s leadership. At this event, Admin 3 emphasized how beneficial the event is with helping understand aspects of Program 3 that has been most impactful for the students.

**Document Analysis**

The second method utilized was document analysis of the homepage websites for the programs. As suggested by Bowen (2009), the quality of the documents selected for a study outweighs the number of documents selected. Initially, program applications were considered for document analysis, however, applications for students to complete to access the programs varied considerably. For example, the application for Program 3 included housing accommodations specific to the students’ needs, whereas the other two programs were not living and learning communities and therefore did not address residential needs. The applications for Program 1 and Program 2 were structured to obtain basic information like demographic and academic data, whereas Program 3 was much more extensive asking questions about topics of interest specific to Black men as
well as some challenges Black males are facing in society. Unlike program applications, the homepages for all of the programs include comprehensive information about each such as clearly defined mission statements and overall objectives for prospective students and for the campus community.

All of the program homepages were developed by the director or collectively by the director and support staff members. All three administrators from this study indicated that program homepages were intentionally designed to include as much information as possible to help eliminate misconceptions or preconceived notions about the programs. For example, a few of the students from this study stated that initially their peers, both Black and non-Black, viewed the programs as either social organizations or for academic remediation. Moreover, the program administrators explained that the breadth of information on the homepages also provided a clear understanding of their overall purpose which they saw as important for institutional partners with whom they hope to collaborate over time. Lastly, the web content of the programs were approved by the institutional divisions where the programs are housed (e.g. Division of Student Affairs or Institute Diversity). The data from the documents were congruent with most of the groups/categories that emerged from interview transcripts (see Table 4).

All three programs’ homepages appear to significantly promote or reference: community, relationships, life skills, mentoring/leadership, academic achievement, and support/resources. Some of these categories appeared in the form of an image. For example, each website had group photos of some of the participants in professional attire and casual attire interacting during events. These images represented a “sense of community, brotherhood, and relationships” among Black males in the programs.
Mentoring and leadership were also primary goals outlined on each site. There was an emphasis on academic achievement that was highly visible throughout the websites, specifically regarding the programs’ intent to improve or increase the retention and graduation rates of Black males. Across the three websites, academic support was closely tied to the support/resources participants could access which included academic resources, mentors, and other networks of support.

Table 4.
*Document analysis comparison table: Homepages of programs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups/Categories</th>
<th>Program 1</th>
<th>Program 2</th>
<th>Program 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life skills</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Influence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring/Leadership</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/Resources</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The groups/categories that emerged from the document analysis of the programs’ homepages.*
Although, the homepages shared several of the groups/categories in common from the data, there were also divergent themes that emerged from the document analysis. Program 1 appeared to emphasize the resources available to support their adjustment to college, “navigating college inside and outside the classroom.” Another primary theme that transpired from Program 1’s website was training. Consistent with data from the interview with Admin 1, “…students in [name of Program 1] are exposed to SafeZone training around issues of gender, sexuality, power, privilege, and oppression.” Additionally, the students from Program 1 obtain training on how to be a mentor. Program 1’s document was the only one of the three programs to reference well-being, which was described as the program supporting participants’ “quality of life.”

Lastly, the “embodiment” of Black men was a major focus of Program 2’s interview data, Program 1’s homepage displays photos and brief bios of graduates and alumni highlighting their post-graduation plans. These images represent and spotlight the accomplishments of past participants’ which could be for recruitment purposes or the program sharing its success stories with the campus community. Moreover, this may be another way Program 1’s attempt to share successful images of Black men in comparison to what society exhibits.

Program 2’s homepage displays multiple images of the participants together at professional and social events. These images suggest a theme of “brotherhood.” For example, photos of the participants at conferences, studying, and standing in front of an image of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. together illustrate a unified relationship among Black men. Out of all three programs, Program 2 is the only website with a message from the Executive Director highlighting the continued “success” of the program. As
another theme, *Success*, incorporates statistical comparisons of the average G.P.A of the participants’ in comparison to Black, non-program members, and in comparison, to non-Black freshmen students’ average G.P.As. The last theme for Program 2’s homepage, could be summarized as “developing global leaders.” The site lends to the program’s goal to encourage participants to lead and serve at the campus and societal levels.

Finally, as the only living and learning community of the programs, Program 3 was the only program to clearly list the benefits and expectations on its website. Unlike the other programs, it also distinctly listed the learning outcomes for the program. A common theme throughout the homepage was “learning.” “Learning,” was closely connected to how the program promotes learning “self-responsibility,” as Black men in society. Similar to Program 2, it also included the theme of *civic engagement*. The program appears to promote having its participants interact with campus community at all levels to foster a sense of community.

These documents collectively suggest the programs’ aspirations to empower Black men as leaders on their campuses. The overarching theme of excelling academically as well as civically appears to be a common goal the programs aim for their participants. While the programs have differences structurally, they all equally attempt to promote academic resources, mentoring, and diverse social experiences that could provide Black males with a sense of community at PWIs.

**Thematic analysis**

Three themes emerged across all three programs: *developing meaningful relationships, building a sense of community, and networks of support* (see Figure 1). Figure 1. illustrates the twelve groups/families, three themes, and core category which
emerged from program interviews and documents from the cross case-analysis. At the end of this chapter, examples of the themes across the cases can be found in Table 5.

![Data Analysis Map]

**Developing meaningful relationships.** First, developing meaningful relationships was a principle desire for the students who joined the programs. When asked how the programs have played a role with their successes, the students mentioned how challenging it was to meet other Black males when they first arrived on campus. The programs appear to provide a space for Black males to connect with one another on a more personal level than they may have in other spaces within the campus. The students summarized the relationships they developed with other students in the programs as “supportive” and “understanding.” One student stated, “…it just feels good to have someone to talk to, that gets me, as a Black man.” The relationships the students referenced in the data were not limited to their peers. All of the students shared their appreciation for the program administrators as well as the relationships they have been able to foster with faculty and campus partners they have been introduced to because of
their involvement with the programs. The students recognized that being in the programs was immensely helpful to their social adjustment to campus.

From the administrators’ perspectives, the development of meaningful relationships for the students in the program appears to be closely related to getting Black males more involved on campus. The setting of the programs is providing an opportunity for the students to interact with other Black males, but the setting also serves as a space where students are learning about other leadership roles on campus they can occupy. The students getting to operate in other spaces on campus provides faculty, staff, and other students the opportunity to see Black males in positions they may not typically see them on their campuses. Therefore, the meaningful relationships these programs are assisting to develop may be serving a dual purpose: enhancing the students’ campus experience and enriching other interpersonal relationships throughout campus.

Building a sense of community. The second theme that emerged from the analysis was building a sense of community. Secondary to increasing graduation and retention rates for Black males, building a sense of community was a key objective for each program. Understanding the research on Black males at PWIs, administrators in each program incorporated various types of programming and components which help foster this goal. For example, one program referenced study hall sessions as another way the students were fostering a community of supportive learning among Black males. A few students from the study commented on how studying together made them feel as though they “had someone to go to for help.” One student shared, “…like we stay on top of each other and make sure we get our work done.” Another way the programs have cultivated a sense of belonging for the students is by providing a space for healthy
dialogue about difficult situations. Some students from the study referenced how helpful it has been to be a part of a program where they feel “heard and have a voice” to help process their emotions without judgement on a majority White campus. The students elaborated that being able to share and discuss what they may have been feeling in a “safe space with other Black men” has been helpful in navigating difficult discussions they may encounter in other spaces on campus, because they have already worked through what they were feeling with the community of students in the programs. Thus, the programs’ attempts to build a sense of community for Black males appears to have been impactful to the participants; however, it could also be assumed that students and faculty not affiliated with the program are also benefitting from the programs’ healthy interactions.

Networks of support. The third theme that emerged from the data was networks of support. Throughout the data the administrators emphasized the importance of creating networks for Black males at a PWI. The administrators find various ways to help establish a network of support for the program as well as for the students. One of the administrators stressed that functioning as a program administrator for Black males at a PWI requires cross-campus collaborations and partnerships that may provide resources for the students while also highlighting the programs’ significance and success with the campus community. One administrator elaborated by stating, “Collaborating with different organizations and different offices to host different types of programs helps break down some of those campus barriers.” Therefore, while establishing networks of support may be a primary goal on how the program assists the students, it also could be valuable for the cultivation of healthy relationships across departments.
The students in this study asserted that the programs have been instrumental in helping them develop networks of support academically, socially, and professionally. With various types of programming, the administrators work to intentionally design events to connect the students with Black faculty, professionals, and alumni. The data revealed creating experiences where the students can interact with Black men in leadership positions has benefitted the students in various ways. As a result of events focused on networking, some of the students have been able to acquire mentors and/or research opportunities that later led to internships. According to the students, the networks of support they have because of these programs have greatly impacted their undergraduate careers and in some cases their future experiences after college.

**Developing community relationships.** By employing the constant comparative method to examine meaning of the codes, groups/families, and themes from the data (Glaser and Strauss, 2017), the core category suggested for this study is *developing community relationships*. The programs of this study appear to be instrumental in *developing community relationships* for the students and the institutions.

The valuable experiences shared by the student participants, seem to have been because of the types of relationships they discovered in programs. According to the administrators, the relationships with other Black males, mentors, faculty, and alumni have been essential to the “sense of community” which permeates the programs. Joining a program intentionally designed to support the academic achievement and well-being of Black males provides these students access to academic resources and networks of support. Based on the experiences the students shared, most of them appeared to become more involved with campus life and occupied leadership roles. By the students’ level of
involvement on campus increasing, they are interacting with more closely with the campus community—developing relationships. The administrators and students from this study, credit the program for the beneficial connections and relationships it has developed for a community of Black males at PWIs.

According to the administrators from this study, cross-campus collaboration is essential to provide resources for the students and to establish relationships with various departments. The relationships that develop with other members of the campus community (e.g. faculty, staff, and departments) that work with the programs appear to enhance the students’ experiences and expose them to beneficial opportunities. Moreover, by campus partners collaborating with programs for Black males, they could be getting a better understanding of this population of students whom they may not interact with on a regular basis. As the students from the programs continue to enter other spaces of the campus into various roles or activities, more non-students of color may also benefit from relationships that may develop. The development of community relationships because of these programs, may be diversifying campus experiences at various levels throughout the institution. Essentially, these programs may be providing a benefit for its students as well as the social climate of the institution.

Table 5.
*Themes Across cases*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing meaningful relationships</td>
<td>“…So, we [the university] work together for, to try to facilitate opportunities for the students because often we share students.” (Admin 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…Um, well I wouldn’t have a lot of the friends. I can say that I have friends now.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If this program didn’t exist, um I would be a recluse and just be in my room all the time. It’s just really like opens you to like a lot of opportunities and stuff. Um, I guess this program really forces you to come out of your shell and really open up and be more talkative and state your opinion and stuff.”
(Student 1.1)

“She, she fits in well with [name of Program 1] honestly. She’s like, she’s like my big, she’s like my big sister, for real, for real. Like that’s the kind of relationship we have built over the past couple of years. And I mean, she gives us a different perspective whenever she gets, or goes on her little, um, speeches. Um, she gives a different perspective, you know, of the Black man in relation to the Black woman too, you know. So, like she’s quick to talk to us about slut shaming. You know stuff like that. You know, calling girls hoes. Um, you know, um respecting, you know, their bodies and stuff like that. So, she puts a lot of stuff like that into perspective. [Admin 1 name] does a great job of doing that too, but you know, since she’s a woman, I feel like when she gives those kinds of talks, it makes it more, like, more valid.” (Student 3.1)

“Well I think we try to do a good job of empowering our guys to get out there and really make an impact on campus, so they collaborate with different organizations and different offices to host different types of programs. I think we do a good job making sure we have campus partnerships that really make this possible because we can't be in all spaces at one time so if our campus partners, are part of a conversation where somebody has a misunderstanding, is misunderstood in terms of what the [name of Program 3] is they can help us,
they can help guide that discussion in the right place. So, in addition to the personal things it does for the students, this program helps break down some of those campus barriers as well, I believe.”
(Admin 3)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Building a sense of community</th>
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<td>“…Second important would just be community. I feel like it's super important to find your community and [Program 2] taught me how to reach out to other students, and just communicate really, with other people. [Admin 2’s name] would talk to me about, the importance as upper classman to reaching out to other students and get them interested in the program. I feel like finding a place for Black males to express themselves is very important, because a lot of times you come in and you feel like you don't have a place where you can be yourself…”</td>
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(Student 2.2)

“…I've liked my experience here at [name of university], especially with the [name of Program 2] ... Being as a small Black community, and to me it feels like, I always explain to people like a small church. You know, like when you go to a small church, most everybody knows everybody. And then, if there's a new person, it's like, "Okay, let's all get to know this person." Because we're a small collective group…” (Student 3.2)

“…so, what are we doing from a university standpoint to provide spaces for them [Black males] to talk through that in a healthy way? And how do we then provide them with the skills necessary to navigate the campus?” (Admin 3)

“…Yeah, so I thought it [Program 3] was good for us to have that community [referring to an all-Black male living and
learning community] and we [Black men on campus] definitely need it. It's for when stuff goes down on campus or in America really, that we need to talk about ... We don't have to worry about someone being twenty minutes across campus just to talk about it, we can just go meet up in the lounge on our floor, that's a five step walk or whatever.” (Student 2.3)

Networks of support

“The biggest thing I remember really brought us [Program 1 students] together to process our emotions, was when Trump was elected. That was probably the saddest day the next day I’ve ever seen and like on campus. Like campus was just dead. And I went to the office, everybody was just silent, and they were just, just felt crushed. So, it’s like we, we had dialogue, we talked about like, it’s not, I feel like not as much as we should or we need to, but it brought up just like what our thoughts were about certain things. A place to kind of process.” (Student 2.1)

“…The third element was around connecting with alumni. I'm [Admin 2] alumni. Our executive director was alumni. The faculty-alumni-student connection was core. Those are the three reasons. The network building for Black males at all levels at [name of university]. The performance trends. The affirming of identity that then impacts accountability, self-efficacy etc.” (Admin 2)

“…Having things such as study halls and people older than you that are on your back that won't let you just sit around lackadaisically. Sometimes they'll [peers in Program 3] be dragging you out of areas to go study when they know you
have tests and things like that. It helped motivate me and it helped me to build this space because I never had it previously. And that's something I've looked into doing this year, especially with the freshman that we have now. I know a lot of people say you have to learn off of experience, well that's true, but when someone who has that experience can tell you what studying can do, even for an extra hour or whatever, on test, learning from their experience alone can help you to do better.” (Student 1.3)

“… I saw it as a great opportunity to meet new people like me and make more connections. [Program 3] like prepares you for life basically. Like I feel like I've learned a lot of skills that I'll be able to take into the real world when I'm out of college on my own. That's really the skill that I say I've gained the most with [Program 3]. But they've also helped professionally with resume workshops, bringing in speakers to help guide us as Black men in the world that may not have necessarily been built for us.” (Student 3.3)
Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this multiple-case study was to examine how programs for Black males at predominantly White institutions influence the participants’ academic achievement and well-being and the institution. Though numerous studies have reported on the individual academic and social challenges Black males are confronted with at PWIs (Allen, 1992; Davis, 1994; Cuyjet, 1997; Neville, 2004; Harper, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Negga et al., 2007; Brooms, 2018) few studies have concentrated on the programs as the unit of analyses. Looking beyond the reported individual factors that interfere with Black males’ retention and graduation rates at PWIs, I sought to gain a better understanding on the impact the programs may have on the institutions on a broader level. In order to accomplish this, three programs for Black males at PWIs were identified. Through semi-structured interviews with students and administrators from the programs and document analysis, the data collected assisted to illustrate the similarities and differences of these programs was then analyzed case-by case and then a cross-case analysis was completed.

As a result of the cross-case analysis three themes emerged from the data: developing meaningful relationships, building a sense of community, and networks of support. These themes address the research questions that guided the study. The research questions are as follows:

1. Why was the program created?

2. How are curricula and practices of the program utilized?
2b: How are outcomes measured in the program?

3. How does the program influence the participants?

3b. How does the program influence the institution?

This study contributes to understanding how the relationships that develop as a result of participation in programs for Black males on predominantly White campuses, extend to the development of relationships with individuals and programs that are campus-wide and beyond the personnel and connections that are within these programs. In this way, the programs developed to ensure student success – also generate connections across the campus that facilitate relationships that benefit the institution by creating a climate of belonging for all students. For example, students in these programs appear to gain skills such as leadership and mentoring and then transfer these relevant skills to their activities in the larger setting of the campus community. This chapter will address as well as discuss the research questions as well as discuss how the findings of this study compare to findings from previous literature. Following the discussion of the research questions, I will summarize the research implications and provide suggestions for future research. The chapter will conclude with an overview of this study’s limitations and a final conclusion.

**Developing meaningful relationships**

The programs for this study were established to help improve the retention and graduation rates of Black males at predominantly White institutions. The administrators in this study further elaborated an additional rationale for these programs -- Black male students were having a difficult time finding other students to connect with those who look like them. The administrators and the students repeatedly discussed how their
programs have played an instrumental roles in developing meaningful relationships with other Black male peers both academically and socially. For example, several of the students described instances where they felt isolated because they were the only Black male in their classes. At times, some students admitted to feeling left out of class discussions with their peers and clearly stated how they felt they had “to prove something” to be seen as legitimate members of their university communities. Some of the students in this study asserted that their sense of isolation did not interfere with their motivation to persist, however, this sense did seem to prohibit their opportunities to connect with other students academically.

Consistent with other research on Black males at PWIs (Cokley, 2001; 2002; Harper & Quaye, 2007), the administrators and students interviewed in this study reiterated how Black males typically gravitated toward Black student organizations (e.g. Greek organizations) to develop social ties. However, the students in this study explained how the programs provided them with opportunities to connect with other Black males, administrators, and faculty in various ways. For example, all of the programs include mentoring as a major component. Students can either become a mentor or obtain a mentor as a participant in the programs I assessed. Student participants repeatedly stated that mentorships have been helpful for facilitating their academic success and social adjustment to campus. They described how essential the programs have been with “helping them to find friends” and “have someone to talk to,” both of which were struggles they faced upon their arrival to campus.

Numerous studies suggest that the lack of academic and social experiences with other Black males on majority White campuses can negatively impact college
experiences (Allen, 1992; Lee, 1997; Harper, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2007). These nonexistent experiences may include lack of mentorship, feelings of isolation, and race-related stress (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Plummer & Slane, 1996; Gloria et al., 1999; Neville et al., 2004; Negga et al., 2007). The findings from this study indicate that positive, supportive relationships evolved for students participating in the programs. Consistent with research about campus climate influencing student experiences (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005), student participants acknowledged that being in the program helped them to develop diverse relationships, which helped them to navigate the institution as well as exposed them to leadership opportunities within the campus community. Admin 2 described Program 2 as “intentionally relational,” where the students not only interact regularly with one another but also are significantly involved with other students and faculty on campus in various roles.

Additionally, Admin 1 and Admin 3 shared similar sentiments on how the programs play a role in cultivating relationships with other departments and faculty. By collaborating with different departments and faculty, the administrators spoke about the programs not only help with the development of relationships for the students but also diversify relationships for their campus partners.

**Building a sense of community**

The administrators described how the programs’ curricula and practices aided in *building a sense of community* for the students. Closely tied to the meaning of students’ “*sense of belonging*” in higher education (Hurtado & Carter, 1997, p. 327), *sense of community* emphasizes the importance of connection among members of a group and is critical for the overall well-being of the community at large (Sarason, 1974). Some of the
programs hosted a variety of events which included leadership retreats, recognition ceremonies, and discussions specifically focused on mental health awareness in the Black male community. Consistent with literature on programs for URM students (Maton et al., 2000; Brooms, 2018), the administrators explained how the purpose of these events were not only to educate or acknowledge the students, but to also provide another way the students came together in support of one another, collectively as a community. Establishing spaces where the students could “trust” one another and feel as though they “belonged,” was a way to build a sense of community among the young men. A few of the students elaborated on how they felt connected to one another on a more personal level as participants in the programs. Therefore, programs may want to conduct a theory of change process to be more intentional about how they build structures that amplify the effect of creating and extending a sense of community for these students.

Images of the young men working collectively on community service projects, receiving leadership awards from the programs, and engaging in dialogue at events of the program are prominently visible on the programs’ websites. The administrators shared how building a sense of community within the programs went beyond creating shared experiences for the participants through professional development workshops, study hall sessions, and cultural emersion trips. The students of these programs expressed how the sense of community they found in the programs they were unable to find in other areas of their campuses, motivated them to stay focused on their classes, inspired them to seek out opportunities in leadership roles, and encouraged them to support one another emotionally and academically.
Networks of support

Findings from this study, revealed that programs played an instrumental role in developing networks of support that influence the students’ academic achievement and well-being. Studies have shown that social networks are essential for students’ overall success in college, but even more so for Black males at PWIs (Maton, Hrabowski, & Schmitt, 2000; Harper, 2007; Brooms, 2018). All of the students reported that because of the programs they were able to connect with other Black males, faculty, and become further involved on campus. They confirmed that the networks of support they developed were the most significant aspect of the programs which aided in their social adjustment to campus. Additionally, when asked to describe what their experience would be without the program, all off the students responded similarly, “…Um, well I wouldn’t have a lot of the friends. (Student 1.3) and “…I would have transferred from [name of university],” (Student 1.1). The networks of support the students referenced were not just with their peers. The networks encompassed mentors, faculty, as well as campus resources, such as the on-campus academic resources facilities. The functional dimension of social networks can serve more than one purpose (Israel, 1985). The administrators suggested that these networks of support the students were being exposed to were functioning as substantial emotional support for communities of Black men on their campuses. This suggests that these programs may be providing participants with academic resources, as well as personal resources who may be beneficial to their emotional well-being and personal development.

Networks of support appear to develop for the programs over time at the institutional level. The administrators shared how they work hard to promote the
programs on their campuses to foster cross-campus collaborations with various
departments, offices, and faculty. From these institutional partnerships, the programs
have benefitted by obtaining resources, faculty mentors, additional funding to co-sponsor
events. According to Admin 3, it appears these on-campus networks of support that have
developed with Program 3, could be valuable for the sustainability of the program and
may be helping other offices interact and work closely with Black males on their
campuses more often than not. These networks of support that develop from cross-
campus collaborations with the programs could also be diversifying the interpersonal
relationships that occur at PWIs. Programs for Black males appear to be functioning as a
way to link people and departments to one another through partnerships that are
supporting an underserved population of students.

**Implications**

The findings from this study could help build a context where programs for Black
males can be integral for activating networks of relationships across multiple levels—
between individuals (e.g. peer to peer, and peer to faculty), offices and departments,
academic disciplines, and extracurricular student organizations. It possible that a
significant purpose of these programs may be directed toward enhancing the social
climate (e.g. interpersonal relationships), because of the way in which they encourage
Black males get more involved with on-campus leadership opportunities. By increasing
Black male student involvement, the institutions may experience a more collective sense
of community on their campuses.

An unexpected finding that emerged from the data was the noticeable influence
the Black female administrators had on the students. It appears having both a Black male
and female involved with the programs contributes to the personal development of young Black men. Interactions with female administrators that was described by student participants were characterized as engendering a more deep, personal level of trust. The students referenced connection with the women administrators to be similar to that with a sister or aunt. It seems there is more to investigate to further understand the impact the Black women may have on the integrative college experiences of young Black men.

Student involvement (e.g. engagement) has been noted as a significant indicator for successful academic (e.g. retention and graduation rates) and social (e.g. sense of belonging) outcomes for college students (Tinto 1975; 2010; Astin, 1999). Findings from this study revealed that Black males who typically were not inclined to be heavily involved on campus, were self-motivated to seek out leadership opportunities both inside and outside the program. As a result of participating in Programs 1, 2, or 3, the students may also be exposing their campuses to diverse examples Black men in various roles for a majority White campus.

Supported by the literature on Black males at PWIs, race-related stress, academic disidentification, academic self-concept, and gender differences have been reported as individual psychosocial factors that may influence academic achievement and well-being (Allen, 1992; Steele and Aronson, 1995; Cokley, 2000). Race-related stress was particularly evident in experiences shared by the student participants of this study. All of the students reflected on instances where they felt isolated as one of few or as the only Black males in their classes. In some instances, they expressed their level of academic capability was both directly and indirectly questioned by their white peers. Additionally, some of the students’ social experiences reflected evidence of academic disidentification,
specifically those students who faced difficulty finding other Black men with whom to connect upon arrival to campus. For example, some of the participants were compelled to join fraternities and other Black affiliated student organizations in search of other Black students before joining the programs for Black men on their campuses. At times, these extracurricular activities affected their ability to focus on their academic responsibilities, but once they joined the programs for Black males on their campuses, academic achievement became their primary focus. Conversely, evidence of negative academic self-concept did not emerge from the data in this study. The young men expressed confidence in their academic abilities and appeared self-motivated to surpass the race-related stress they encountered in the classroom. Lastly, there is no evidence of gender differences to report in comparing how Black males and Black females’ experiences at PWIs differ because this study did not include Black female students, however, this would be an important area to address in the future.

From an operational standpoint, all of the programs are fully funded by their institutions. However, each program critiqued the level of support provided and expressed a desire for additional funds specifically for student needs (e.g. books, tuition costs, etc.). The academic and social benefits students receive from participating in the programs do not alleviate college expenses, some unforeseen, that many students face. Another critique is the limited number of full-time staff for each program, which limits the ability to function effectively or maximize programmatic resources. According to participants, administrators and support staff appear to be fulfilling multiple roles to support the students academically, socially, and at times, emotionally. Additional staff could increase access to workshops, skills, mentors to model success. Finally, although
the programs highlight some of the students who have excelled academically and as leaders on campus, there was little information on the students who graduated from the institutions. Efficient methods for tracking program alumni could provide information about post-graduate plans and outcomes of program participants and could expand the reach and understanding of program impact on a broader level.

The three themes from this study: developing meaningful relationships, sense of community, and networks of support are closely consonant with the theoretical framework for this study. Moos’ three Social Climate Dimensions are relationships, personal development, and systems, maintenance and change (Moos, 1987). The programs in this case study appear to contain valuable relationships based on the supportive, trusting, and well-connected sense of community the students spoke about in the interviews. The apparent social climate within the programs studied appear to be supportive of student academic achievement and well-being, by providing mentorship and campus resources that aid in their success at the universities. The meaningful relationships the programs have facilitated for student participants appear to enhance involvement outside of the program, as well as motivate them to perform well academically.

Second, these programs are intentional with specific curricula and practices that support the personal development of the participants. Administrators provide programming and courses that focus on Black male identity development, professional development, and academic resources specific to the students’ individual needs in order to persist. By monitoring the students’ academic performance and interests,
administrators are providing a nurturing environment for personal growth both inside and outside of the classroom.

Third, these programs adhere to the *system maintenance and change* dimension by outlining learning outcomes for the students and objectives for the program itself. Assessing the types of programming and resources students are offered semester to semester, allows administrators determine which workshops or events have been most beneficial. With intentional goals aimed to improve graduation and retention rates of Black males and to support personal development, the programs described here appear to be providing an environment that sustains academic achievement and overall well-being. Findings revealed that students’ participation led to greater involvement with campus activities and pursuit of various leadership roles across the campus. According to Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement (Astin, 1999; Evans et al., 2010), student involvement is a significant indicator for positive academic and social outcomes for college students. By participating in these programs, students have been exposed to leadership opportunities within the program, which may have encouraged interest in opportunities outside of the program. Consistent with the literature on Black males, (e.g. Harper & Quaye, 2007) Black males who engage in campus activities and leadership positions display greater connection with the campus and fosters academic success. Moreover, it has been reported that the more academically and socially involved students are with their campus, the more likely they will be retained and will graduate (Tinto, 2010). The programs in this case study appear to be encouraging students and structuring student opportunity to get more involved with the campus. As a result, the PWIs likely benefit in turn due to greater interactions with Black males in various roles.
Future research

This study emphasizes the importance of investigating the contextual factors of programs for Black males, in comparison to how previous studies that have focused on individual factors. This study could provide a framework for longitudinal studies that analyze the credibility of identifiable variables over time. Additionally, the current study indicates that case study methodology is feasible for additional research investigating underserved populations such as faculty of color, other student groups of color at PWIs, as well as female student groups in programs focused on increasing gender diversity in STEM fields. Another interesting avenue to investigate more closely could be the intersectionality of the student participants. For example, a few of the students were of Nigerian decent. Future studies could investigate the ways the students’ cultural backgrounds may or may not have influenced their experiences in programs for Black males at PWIs.

Despite Critical Race Theory not being central to the initial frameworks utilized for this study, it could be applied to future studies that further explore the larger question of why Black male spaces are critical at PWIs to offset the college campus context which is affected by assumptions of racial inferiority. CRT further situates the problem of the lack of Black male college success outside individuals and brings attention to the hegemonic history, structure and assumptions of the setting within which Black male students are attempting to navigate. Finally, larger scale studies focusing on programs that support URM students at PWIs could provide a clear, comprehensive understanding of specific strategies or best practices that are empirically validated as mechanisms for
impact and success – both for students and for campuses seeking to successfully integrate diverse populations.

**Limitations**

First, this small sample of Black male experiences did not capture the experiences of the all of the students in the program, nor did it include the experiences of the Black males who do not participant in the programs. Black males’ at PWIs experiences vary by individual. Further research should include the perspectives of the Black males who do not participate in these programs to get a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of multiple experiences of constituents at PWIs. Another limitation of this study was the time of year which the data was collected — early to mid-summer of 2018. This timeframe is typically difficult for obtaining access to students and administrators associated with student service units at universities. Despite this challenge, I was able to interview several students and administrators for this study. I may, however, generated greater response and additional students to select from for interviews. Conducting additional interviews with campus partners who have worked with the programs under study could have provided additional perspective and experiences related to the impact of these programs on the social climate of the participating institutions. Lastly, a common limitation of case study research is generalizability. As an exploratory methodology, case studies are inherently limited in terms of the ability to report that the findings of this study are generalizable to all programs for Black males at PWIs.

**Conclusion**

This multiple case study examined how best practices of programs for Black males at PWIs play an instrumental role in developing interpersonal relationships, which
may benefit student college experiences as well as enhance cross-campus relationships at the participating institutions. Findings from this study reveal how relationships within a campus community have enhanced the personal development and academic achievement of Black males. Further it appears that programs for Black males on predominantly White campuses contribute to improving the social climate of the institutions.

Over time, meaningful relationships facilitated by the programs I studied appear to be shaping young Black males’ experiences in important ways as they matriculate and navigate majority White campuses. More research is needed to highlight how programs for Black males and other groups may positively influence the students’ experiences as well as how these programs may be instrumental with developing relationships across campuses.

Programs for Black males at PWIs may be serving more than just the students. The programs increase institutional capacity for cultural knowledge and understanding of Black males and the nature of networks that support success for diverse students. As a benefit to the social climate, programs for Black males may be reinforcing explicit institutional values for engaging and educating diverse populations including students, faculty, and administration. Community psychologists and leaders in higher education need to produce more work that emphasizes the ways in which programs for marginalized groups not only serve the students but also have a greater impact on campus communities at-large. This kind of relevant campus-based research with significant, actionable implications, can serve to increase the value of Community Psychology within the institutions where we are trained and from which resources can be deployed for public good. Our campuses should serve diverse populations and should do so in ways
that positively influence both individuals and the campus communities where individuals matriculate.
References


APPENDIX A.

Letter of Interest (LOI)

Dear [Program Coordinator],

My name is Liana Mentor and I am a Community Psychology doctoral candidate at the University of Miami. I obtained your name and email address from [Point of Contact] and he/she recommended that you were good person to connect with about [Program X] at the [Univ of X].

I am writing to express interest in conducting a case study for my dissertation that is examining how [Program X] at the [Univ of X] influence the academic achievement and well-being of Black male college students as well as the institution. As a self-identified African American/Black doctoral student, I am personally invested in this research topic and hold a deep interest in learning more about programs for Black males at predominantly White institutions.

As I wait to hear back from the University of Miami’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), I would love to set up a time to meet with you and provide more details about the purpose of the study and what it will entail. I currently reside in the Atlanta area and would be happy to come to your office or set up a phone call.

My doctoral advisor, Dr. Laura Kohn-Wood, Professor & Chair of the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies at the University of Miami, is supervising this study. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to email me at lmentor@miami.edu or Dr. Laura Kohn-Wood at l.kohnwood@miami.edu

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Liana C. Mentor, M.S. Ed.
Ph.D. Candidate| Community Well-Being
School of Education and Human Development | University of Miami
APPENDIX B.

Program Administrator Interview Script

Hello (Administrator Name), welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Liana Mentor and I am a graduate student at the University of Miami conducting research for my dissertation on programs for Black males at predominantly White institutions. The interview will include questions regarding your role and experiences as the Administrative Title for PROG X at Institution name.

I would like your permission to tape record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. Please note, that all of your responses will remain confidential.

At this time, I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I am the responsible investigator, specifying your participation in the research project. You and I have both signed and dated each copy, certifying that we agree to continue this interview. You will receive one copy and I will keep the other under lock and key, separate from your reported responses.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop or take a break, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.
APPENDIX C.

Student Participant Interview Script

Hello Student’s Name, welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Liana Mentor and I am a graduate student at the University of Miami conducting research for my dissertation on programs for Black males at predominantly White institutions. The interview will include questions regarding your experiences as a college student and as a student participant of PROG X at Institution name.

I would like your permission to tape record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. Please note, that all of your responses will remain confidential.

At this time, I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I am the responsible investigator, specifying your participation in the research project. You and I have both signed and dated each copy, certifying that we agree to continue this interview. You will receive one copy and I will keep the other under lock and key, separate from your reported responses.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop or take a break, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.
APPENDIX D.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

University of Miami
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
A Case Study: Programs for Black Males at Predominantly White Institutions

The following information describes the research study in which you are being asked to participate. Please read the information carefully. At the end, you will be asked to sign if you agree to participate.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT: You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this project is to understand the experiences of Black male college students that participate in a program established by a university that supports the academic achievement and well-being of Black males on a predominantly White campus.

PROCEDURES: If selected for this study, you will be asked to participate in a 60 min interview, in-person or via Skype conducted by the principal investigator. Questions during the interview will ask about your experiences as a Black male enrolled in a program that supports your academic achievement and success at a predominantly White institution. You may be contacted by the principal investigator after the interview if clarification of responses is necessary.

RISKS: Risks in this study are considered minimal. However, you can refuse to answer a question, or stop participation in the study at any time without penalty.

BENEFITS: Although there is no direct benefit from this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The interviewer will not use your name when discussing or reporting the study findings. ALL RESPONSES WILL BE ANONYMOUS.

COSTS: There are no costs associated with your participation in this study. To compensate you for your time, you will receive an Amazon e-gift card in the amount of $25 at the end of the interview.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate in the study or withdraw your consent at any time. Your desire not to participate in this study or request to withdraw will not negatively affect your status as a student of your institution.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have any questions about this project, please contact Liana C. Mentor (doctoral candidate) at (305) 301-5043, or Laura Kohn-Wood, Ph.D. (dissertation chair), at (305) 284-1316. If you have any questions regarding your
rights as a participant, you may contact the Human Subjects Research Office at the University of Miami at (305) 243-3195.

**PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT:**
I have read the information in this consent form and agree to participate in this study. I have had the chance to ask any questions I have about this study, and they have been answered for me. I am entitled to a copy of this form after it has been read and signed.

______________________________  Date
Signature of Participant

______________________________
Name of Participant

______________________________  Date
Signature of person obtaining consent

______________________________
Name of person obtaining consent
APPENDIX E.

Program Administrator Interview Guide

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself with respect to your professional background and interests and how you began working with Program X?

2. How long have you been working as the (position title) for Program X at the University of X?

3. Why was Program X established at the University of X?

4. What types of support does Program X provide the students?

5. As the (position title) of Program X, what are your responsibilities?

6. How would you describe your role in the program and with the students?

7. In your role, what types of interactions do you have with the students?

8. How do students learn about and get involved with Program X?

9. What types of interaction(s) does the program maintain with the students (e.g. programmatically, meetings, etc.)?

10. What do you think are some successes of Program X?

11. What do you think are some challenges for Program X?

12. Why do you think college campuses are putting so much emphasis on Black males?

13. Beyond the specific students who are involved with the program, how has Program X influenced the campus community?

14. From your perspective, what are some of the major challenges for Black men on your campus?

15. From what you have seen, what differences do you see between Black males and females on this campus academically and/or socially?
16. What areas does Program X see as challenges for this population of students in comparison to Black females or other student populations?

17. What learning outcomes is the program assessing and how are these outcomes being measured?

18. How would you describe the environment Program X provides Black men?

19. Of these components, which would you say have been the most beneficial to the students and why?

20. If you could add another component or a new component to Program X, what would that be and why?

21. From your perspective, what do you think academic achievement and well-being mean for Black males at PWIs?

22. Finally, one of the things I would like to do is look at relevant documents that may help me understand more about this program. Are there any documents you suggest may be helpful?

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. At this point, that’s all the questions I have, do you have any additional comments or questions for me?
APPENDIX F.

Student Interview Guide

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

2. Why did you want to go to college?

3. How would you describe your college experience?

4. How did you find out about the Program X?

5. What made you decide to enroll in Program X?

6. What have been some of your successes in college?

7. What have been some of your challenges in college?

8. How has Program X played a role with those successes and/or challenges?

9. What components of the program have been most beneficial to you and why?

10. What do you like about Program X?

11. How would you describe the environment of Program X?

12. How has participating in Program X, influenced your time at Univ X?

13. If you could add another component to Program X’s, what would that be and why?

14. How has participating in Program X, influenced your on-campus experience with your professors, peers, involvement?

15. From your perspective, what does academic achievement and well-being mean for you as a Black male at a PWI?

At this point, that’s all the questions I have, do you have any additional comments or questions for me? Thank you for taking the time to meet with me.
# ATTENTION

## PROGRAM X STUDENTS

We are looking for Black male undergraduate students from the Program X at University X to participate in a 60-minute research study interview about your college experiences.

To see if you are eligible to participate in the study, scan the QR code and take a brief survey

![QR Code](image)

If selected, you will receive a $25 Amazon e-gift card for participating!

For more info, email: lmentor@miami.edu

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This study has been approved by the University of Miami Institutional Review Board. The Principal Investigator(s) of this study are Liana Mentor, doctoral candidate of Community Well-Being at the University of Miami & Dr. Laura Kohn-Wood, Advisor & Professor of Educational & Psychological Studies at the University of Miami.
APPENDIX H.

Student Pre-Screening Questionnaire

PROGRAM X Experiences Study
Consent Form for Online Pre-screening Questionnaire

Principal Investigators: Liana C. Mentor, Doctoral Candidate, Community Well-Being, University of Miami (lmentor@miami.edu)
Dr. Laura Kohn-Wood, Professor, Department of Educational & Psychological Studies (l.kohnwood@miami.edu)

Thank you for your interest in participating in the Program X Experiences Study. The purpose of this study is to better understand experiences of Black male college students in Program X at Univ X. The study consists of a 60-minute, in-person, audio taped interview.

This pre-screening questionnaire takes about 5-7 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary, and you may exit the survey at any time by closing your web browser. All of the information you provide through this pre-screening questionnaire is confidential.

The purpose of this online pre-screening is to assist the researchers with determining your eligibility to participate in the interview portion of the study. If you are not eligible or choose not to participate in the interview, your pre-screening responses will be deleted after we have completed recruitment unless you indicate that you would like for us to retain your information to contact you for future studies you may be eligible for.

Your responses will be reviewed instantly, and you will either be informed (a) that your responses are under review, and you will be contacted regarding eligibility, or (b) that you are not currently eligible for this study. If you provide contact information, we will contact you to inform you as to whether or not you are eligible for the study, which consists of an approximately 60-minute, in-person, audio recorded interview. If scheduling conflicts arise, the interview may be conducted via Skype.

If selected to participate in the study, you will receive a $25 Amazon e-gift card at the end of the interview. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. If you would like to contact the Principal Investigator in the study to discuss this research, please e-mail lmentor@miami.edu

There are no primary risks associated with completing this on-line pre-screening questionnaire. If you have any questions about the study, please contact the Principal Investigators using the email addresses above. If you have questions or concerns about
your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Miami by telephone or e-mail at 305-243-3195 or hsro@miami.edu

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary, you are **18 years of age or older**, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.

*Please note that this survey will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.*
*Please note that this survey will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.*

- I consent, begin the online pre-screening questionnaire
- I do not consent, I do not wish to participate

### Q1 What is your gender?
- Male
- Female
- Transgender Male
- Transgender Female

### Q2 What is your race?
- American Indian/Alaska Native/Native American/Indigenous
- Asian
- Black
- Latino/Hispanic (non-White)
- Middle Eastern/North African
- Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
- White/Caucasian
- Multiracial Black and other race(s)
- Other Multiracial
Q3 Within the Black racial group in the U.S., there are many ethnicities (e.g. African American, Nigerian, Haitian, Jamaican, Afro-Brazilian, etc.). If you selected Black as your race, what is your ethnicity?

______________________________

Q4 What is your age?

- Under 18 years old
- 18-21 years old
- 21-24 years old

______________________________

Q5 Are you a first-generation college student?

- Yes
- No

______________________________

Q6 What is your class level?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

______________________________

Q7 What is your major?

______________________________
Q8 Are you a student-athlete?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

Q9 Are you a transfer student?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

Q10 Did you receive any academic scholarship(s) to attend college?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

Q11 I have participated in PROGRAM X for:
   ○ Less than 6 months
   ○ 1 year
   ○ 2 years or more

Q12 Please provide your preferred email address to be considered for this study.

End of Block: Informed Consent