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WHAT YOU SPEAK SHALL COME: EXAMINING SPIRITUALITY ON
RETENTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES ATTENDING A
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION USING A SEQUENTIAL
EXPLANATORY MIXED-METHODS DESIGN

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Educational Administration, Leadership, and Research
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Carlous B. Yates

August 2021

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RETENTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES ATTENDING A
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Associate Provost of Research & Graduate Education

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Hermon C. and Eva M. Yates, and in loving memory of my grandparents, John (Dickie) and Carrie Thompson.

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“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11, New Intentional Version)

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“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians, 4:13, The New King James Version)

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African American males have faced significant challenges at institutions of higher education over the years (Harper, 2013; Griffith et al., 2019). This study aimed to examine the impact of spirituality on the retention of African American males attending a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) through a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design study.

The participants in the study were African American males ($N = 47$) with age range 18 to 48 years old all attending a mid-sized university located in the mid-western region of the United States during the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters. The university is considered a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). In the quantitative phase, participants completed the Life Attitude Profile - Revised (LAP-R) questionnaire. In the second phase of the study, the qualitative phase, a nested sample ($n = 12$) participated in the interview protocol, Spirituality and Black males. The quantitative findings indicate that the perceptions of spirituality for African American males attending a PWI measured a reasonably high degree of spirituality ($M = 83.29$, $SD = 15.65$). From the interview protocol, emerged four themes. The participants of this study used 1) spirituality to reinforce grit, 2) spirituality provided a sense of purpose, 3) prayer was

used as a form of guidance and a coping mechanism, and 4) religious institutions provide spiritual support.

The results implicate that when African American males are connected to spiritual resources, they stay grounded and focused. Spirituality is a tool used to aid in the retention of African American males at PWIs. Institutions must find ways to link African American males early in their experience on campus to find connections and a network of support. Individuals who work directly with African American males must support and encourage acts of spirituality. Universities must be open to spiritual development and support for African American males and provide resources beyond religious affiliations.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Since the early 1900s, there has been an increased interest in religion's role in African Americans' lives (Taylor et al., 2004). Additionally, there is an increasing desire to understand the impact of spirituality for African Americans to maneuver through adversity. Literature concerning student success and faith involvement suggests that religion, spirituality, and faith have a resounding impact on student success. Specifically, it has been found that religious participation and spirituality largely account for African American college students' coping strategies and problem-solving styles (Constantine et al., 2002). It has been argued that "African Americans remain committed to church involvement and religious practice, in part, due to the range of individual benefits and supports that these opportunities provide" (Donahoo & Caffey, 2010, p.79).

While spirituality and religiousness are interrelated concepts, they are not identical. Taylor et al. (2004) define religion as an organized system of beliefs, practices, and rituals designed to facilitate closeness to God. Spirituality is seen as a personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, meaning, and relationships with the sacred.

Although religiousness may be an outward manifestation of spirituality, spirituality can exist in the absence of religiousness, while religiousness does not guarantee a developed spirituality (Chandler et al., 1992). Conversely, Walker et al. (2002) contend that spirituality is a private experience that one does not have to connect to any particular religion or community of faith.

Furthermore, spirituality has been shown to involve a sense of meaning and purpose within one's life (Young et al., 1998).

According to Herndon (2003), African Americans rely heavily upon spirituality as a coping mechanism to deal with stress. Jang and Johnson (2004) analyzed data from a national survey of African American adults. The authors concluded that African Americans who have a religious commitment tended to report lower levels of distress than those who were not. Jagers and Smith (1996) suggested that spirituality is a worldview that is central to the cultural expressions found in the African Diaspora. At the same time, Chandler et al. (1992) discussed spirituality as a process of development involving the accumulation and integration of spiritual experiences over time. Therefore, spirituality is highly perceived as coping with the variety of stresses African American males might have on campus (Dancy, 2010). Furthermore, religion and spirituality served as critical buffers against many students' challenges while pursuing their career goals and aspirations on a predominantly White university campus (Constantine et al., 2002). Watson (2006) argued that African American men's spiritual identities are sensitively linked to perceptions of campus environments. If African American male students embraced and capitalized on their spirituality, they were more likely to continue their college careers (Herndon, 2003). Herndon (2003) suggested that African American males build support networks through spiritual practices and connections. "Essentially, churches provide African American college students with another family and a sense of home that they need to survive and succeed both in college and in life" (Donahoo, & Caffey, 2010, p.101). Overall, studies show that spirituality has a significant role in helping African American college students cope with stress at the collegiate level.

Statement of the Problem

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), the four-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate African American students attending all 4-year institutions is 23.8 percent for the 2012 starting cohort and 18.1 for African American males. African American males have faced significant challenges at higher education institutions over the years (Harper, 2013; Griffith et al., 2019). A 2017 report relating to graduation and retention rates for African American males found that only 34% graduated in six years, leaving them at the bottom for degree attainment amongst their peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). While the data is discouraging, there are small pockets of African American males persisting against the odds, but not enough (Cuyjet, 2006; Haywood & Sewell, 2018). Although there has been a slight increase in African American male retention over the past 15 years, there is still a long way to go. Data suggest there has been little to no progress in increasing participation rates among African American males (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Purpose and Research Questions

This study examined the relationship of spirituality on African American male's retention at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). An explanatory sequential mixed methods design involved collecting quantitative data first and then explaining the quantitative results with in-depth qualitative data. In the first quantitative phase of the study, Life Attitude Profile- Revised (LAP-R, 1999; Appendix F), data was collected from undergraduate African American males to measure the level of their spirituality. The second qualitative phase was conducted as a follow-up to the quantitative results. In

this phase, results from a nested sample of participants were used to identify themes to help explain the quantitative results. In this explanatory follow-up, the interviews' major themes were used to understand spirituality's role among African American college male students at a PWI.

Previous research has examined the connection to religious orientation amongst African Americans (Constantine et al., 2002; Dancy, 2010; Herndon, 2003; Watson, 2006). However, few have focused on the relationship between spirituality and academic progress among African American males. Given the attrition rate of this population on college campuses, the need to look at possible strategies that will increase retention is paramount.

Research Questions

The following are the primary research questions for this study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of spirituality of African American males attending Predominantly White Institutions?

RQ2: What is the strength of the correlation between Spirituality levels and GPA?

RQ3: How do African American male college students attending Predominantly White Institutions use spirituality as a retention strategy?

RQ4: How do the findings of the qualitative results help to explain the quantitative results?

Theoretical Framework

Substantive Theories

Logotherapy

Logotherapy, developed by Viktor Frankl, is a philosophy, a personality theory, and a means of treating emotional difficulties and establishing a sense of meaning and purpose in life (Crumbaugh, 1988; Wong, 1998b, as cited in Schulenberg, 2003, p. 307). Frankl's (1963) theory of logotherapy aligns with Reker & Peacock's (1981) higher-order factor Striving for Meaning, a concept that Frankl claims to be a vital part of the human condition and represents the strength of motivation to find meaning and purpose. Frankl viewed logotherapy as a way to enhance existing therapies by emphasizing the "meaning-dimension" or spiritual dimension of human beings (Madeson, 2020). Logotherapy examines the physical, psychological, and spiritual (noological) aspects of a human being, and it can be seen through the expression of an individual's functioning.

The spiritual dimension is one of meaning. The basic tenets of logotherapy are that

- human life has meaning,
- human beings long to experience their own sense of life meaning, and
- humans have the potential to experience meaning under any and every circumstance (Frankl, 1963; Schulenberg, 2003).

Grit

Grit is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Grit entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over the years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress. Grit provides the will to keep going

when persistence is not enough. Spirituality and grit can be tough to describe, but both provide immense amounts of meaning and motivation in people's lives (Chandler et al., 1992; Duckworth et al., 2007).

As advanced by Angela Duckworth, the increasing popularity of Grit theory has encouraged admissions officers to review non-cognitive factors to build a diverse class and create an engaging campus community (Powell, 2013; Wick, 2015). The aforementioned reasoning suggests that grit may be as essential as IQ to high achievement (Duckworth et al., 2007). Grittier students fare better in exams, find a sense of purpose in their desired vocation, and are more optimistic than less gritty students (Duckworth, 2016).

Jumat et al. (2020) identified grit as a protective factor against later burnout, suggesting that less gritty students are more susceptible to burnout. Grit tends to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). Grit can entail dedication to either implicitly or explicitly rewarding goals. A gritty individual approaches achievement as a marathon; their advantage is stamina. Whereas disappointment or boredom signals to others that it is time to change trajectory and cut losses, the gritty individual stays the course (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Subjectivity Statement

The lack of literature describing the impact of spirituality on the retention of African American males coupled with personal life experiences led to the interest in spirituality and its impact on African American males' retention rates at PWIs. As a first-generation college student, the personal connection with spiritual organizations and my belief in God sustained me through adversity and the doubt of completion while attending

a PWI. I found a network of resources, a support system, and family resemblance through those spiritual connections.

As a professional in student affairs, I have the firsthand experience of observing how grit appears to be an essential construct in retaining African American males at PWIs. My personal observations have primarily suggested that grittier students, particularly African American males, will most likely be retained until graduation. These observations led me to wonder if other factors such as church attendance and one's sense of spirituality influences added to those students' grittiness just as it influenced my personal educational journey.

Goals of the Research

This research aimed to explain the role and importance of spirituality in African American male college students' lives. In addition, the aim was to use the findings to add to the discussion as it relates to African Americans' connection to spirituality as a driving force to persevere through adversity. In particular, the researcher sought to better understand factors that enhance grit among African American male students in their pursuit to graduate from PWIs where barriers overwhelmingly affect their ability to complete a four-year degree (Strayhorn, 2014; Harper, 2013; Haywood & Sewell, 2016). Through this research, additional goals include a better understanding of the impact spirituality has on African American males' retention and to provide PWIs with alternative ways to support African American males to graduation. By understanding resiliency, universities can develop student support services to align with a students' modus of motivations, whether external or internal.

Mixed Methods Definition and Rationale

The researcher selected a mixed-methods design. Mixed methods research is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and “mixing” quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study to understand a research problem more completely (Ivankova et al., 2006 p. 3). This methodological approach was chosen because it helped organize and merge a descriptive and interpretive story of spirituality among African American male college students.

Significance of the Study

Researchers have sought to understand spirituality and its impact on the mental ability to persevere through difficult times. Persevering through difficult times is termed as grit (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth, 2016; Dutta & Singh, 2017; Jumat et al., 2020). This research project aimed to contribute to the research related to academic persistence among African American males attending PWIs. African American males have the lowest retention rate of all subgroups at PWIs (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). It is well known that researchers consistently compare African American students to other groups to highlight deficits; however, the present study is grounded within the group and does not attempt group comparisons. Knowledge and understanding of factors affecting African American male student retention at PWIs will provide additional insight into their attrition and motivation to keep going while experiencing barriers to their success.

Additionally, this study may yield valuable insights due to the mixed methods research design (Creswell, 2013; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Schoonenboom, & Johnson, 2017). This integration provided a more in-depth

insight into retaining African American males at PWIs, identifying the predicting power of selected internal and external factors contributing to or impeding students' academic success. The research explored the participants' views regarding the findings in additional capacities.

Definitions of Terms

African American: Black or African American is defined as all citizens or residents of the United States who have origins in any of Africa's Black populations. African Americans are generally direct descendants of captive Africans who survived the slavery era within the United States (Dodson, 2009).

Dependent Student - a dependent student is dependent on their parent or guardian for financial assistance and is therefore required to report that income on the FAFSA.

Full-time Student – Defined as a student that enrolls 12 or more credit hours each semester throughout an academic year.

Grit – Defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth, 2016).

Retention – This is the normal progression when a student enrolls each semester full-time until graduation.

Student Leader – A student leader is one who is actively engaged in extracurricular activities or extra-academic activities on a college campus.

Life Attitude Profile- Revised (LAP-R) – The LAP-R is a 48-item self-report multidimensional measure of discovered meaning and purpose in life and the motivation to find meaning and purpose in life.

Predominantly White Institution (PWI) – an institution of higher that has 50% or greater of White student enrollment

Spirituality – Is defined as s students’ belief in a power beyond themselves, along with a reliance on their beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life as a coping mechanism and a lens through which to view the world (Schreiner, 2014).

Overview of Study

This study examined spirituality on African American male’s retention at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used, and involved collecting quantitative data first and then explained the quantitative results with in-depth qualitative data. Chapter I included an introduction to the study's problem and background, the purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, goals of the research, and definitions of key terms central to the topic. Chapter II will review current literature related to African American males’ retention at PWIs, retention barriers, and spirituality.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review addresses barriers that impact the retention of African American males at institutions of higher education. Barriers include campus environment, racial climate, institutional practices, social interactions, support systems, and resources. This chapter also examines spirituality and its impact on student retention.

For many people achieving success starts with college; however, it is not often the issue of being accepted into college but the completion that impacts one's perception of success. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education college enrollment rates for 18 to 24-year-old males between 2000 and 2018 increased (from 33 to 38 percent). African American males rose from 25 percent in 2000 to 33 percent in 2018. However, African American male students' graduation rates have had minimum improvement over the last 15 years (Strayhorn, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). According to most of the literature on the subject, African American males have faced significant challenges at higher education institutions over the years (Harper, 2013). The 6-year graduation rate for African American males at 4-year institutions, public and private colleges, is less than 40%. In some years, as high as 67.6% of African American males who enter college do not persist to graduate within six years. More than two-thirds of black men who start college left before earning their bachelor's degree. Data show that there has been little to no progress in increasing participation rates among African American males.

As many scholars and practitioners continue to research the barriers that hinder the success of this population of students, there is still limited knowledge on how to

increase the retention rates of African American males. Research by Schreiner (2014) indicated that while some general principles can help all students succeed. “The “one size fits all” approach that many institutions have taken over the past three decades has not resulted in greater success for historically underrepresented students” (Schreiner, 2014, p. 11). What might work for one group of students will not necessarily work for another. Universities must consider hiding factors that are not constantly prevalent in quantitative data; however, it is essential to look at qualitative data to show the narrative of different students’ success. Cuyjet (2006) suggests that campus leaders should develop a clear understanding of African American male’s numbers and general characteristics present on their campus. “To effectively assist African American men’s matriculation, one must have a reasonable understanding of that population” (Cuyjet, 2006, p.15).

Retention Barriers

African American males have difficulties and challenges that may factor in the lack of success in higher education. Universities have difficulties and challenges that may factor in the lack of success for African American males. These issues include lack of resources, few opportunities for mentorship, role models, funding, and support systems, to name a few. Many of these issues center on the Imposter Syndrome Theory of not feeling a sense of belonging or understanding the process of how to navigate the college experience. According to Corkindale (2019)

Imposter syndrome can be defined as a collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evident success. ‘Imposters’ suffer from chronic self-doubt and a sense of intellectual fraudulence that override any feelings of success or external proof of their competence. (para. 3)

When students have negative self-doubt, they fail from the fear of being successful. African American males who manage to enroll at a higher education institution run a significant risk of not achieving academic success or obtaining a degree (Cuyjet, 2006). Some students arrive on college campuses, they have dealt with the loss of loved ones to gun violence, homelessness, food and housing insecurities, abuse, and in some cases, counted out by high school administrators. Students of color, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, often have trouble meeting the academic demands of college or finding a social niche at institutions of higher learning (Landry, 2003). Unfortunately, having so many odds against a student, it can be not easy to come into an environment and trust new individuals or feel welcome and supported. While not all, some African American males

“come to the campus community at a psychological disadvantage in that they often perceived themselves as “less than” the others they meet. Thus, some of the energy necessary to succeed academically is often directed at other pursuits, such as achieving “manhood” status among other African American men on the campus and achieving status with African American females” (Cuyjet, 2006, p.17).

Campus Environment

Other factors such as the campus culture and attributes of the college often impact the students' overall experience and, according to Strayhorn (2012), in particular African American students. Countless universities have found that providing students a sense of belonging to be vital in increasing the success of minority students on their campuses. When underrepresented student populations do not feel a strong sense of belonging on

their campus, it impacts how they integrate, perform, and persist. A better sense of belonging among students at four-year institutions leads to higher personal and academic success rates later in their college experiences, the researchers said. Students who report a higher sense of belonging at the end of the first year seem to do better than their counterparts (Johnson, 2020). Multiculturalism and diversity offices on the college campus are vital in developing a space that embraces difference. In particular, some PWIs provide Welcome B(L)ACK Weeks and Early Entry programs designed to help minority students navigate campus and meet minority faculty and staff before the semester. Many times, this creates a false sense of reality for students of color. Once the semester starts, many students feel less support, and the friendly faces they saw during the welcome weeks disappear among the various faces on campus that do not look like them. The lack of representation often leads to a reverse effect for students of color, diminishing the sense of belonging on campus. Students who do not have a sense of belonging will not stay. As a result, some students decide to leave college because of the need to return to familiarity and comfort. In such instances, students may struggle to manage their emotions about being away from homes, families, or high school friends (Strayhorn, 2010).

Support Systems

According to the National Center of Education Statistics, of the 16.6 million undergraduates enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States in 2018, 13% were African American, and fewer than 5% African American males (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Unfortunately, African American male enrollment in higher education is virtually the same as in 1976. Many different things can attribute to

these numbers. The U.S. Department of Education enrollment reports indicated that it is not due to the lack of recruitment of these students to college campuses but the failure to retain and graduate African American males. The struggle starts with the need to understand the value of an education beyond high school. African American males often find the obligation to make money to support the family and themselves. Additionally, the internal belief that is college attainable within their personal goals?

Black male students are often discouraged from participating in college preparatory classes in high school or may not have the resources. Several of these young men are from single-family households who, in various cases, have to be the man of the house or help with being a provider to the overall family. These responsibilities sometimes lead to a lack of understanding of the value of advanced placement courses and dual credit by parents, so they do not push their students to take these classes, unlike their white counterparts. If there is a financial shortage within the home, the parent is not necessarily looking to create more debt by encouraging their students to participate in educational programs with fees.

African American males from low-income households are encouraged to excel in sports rather than academics and less prepared for college-level work. The sport becomes a hope of advancing to the league to become a way out of poverty and not education. Person and LeNoir (1997) reported that “about one out of every nine African American male students at predominantly white four-year institutions is an athlete” (p. 79). “Black men among the top 25 BCS schools represent 3 percent of their student bodies, but 60 percent of their football players.... Black students are apparently good enough for playing fields, but not the laboratories” (Thomas, 2014, p. 75). On campuses where the

majority of African American males' undergraduates are athletes, or on campuses where athletes are the most visible of the African American male students, it is challenging to promote the perception of African males as scholars, as intellectuals, or as campus leaders in non-sports activities (Cuyjet, 2006).

Of course, not all African American males who attend college are student-athletes, and many enter and do well. When African American males find mentorship and guidance on a college campus, they feel empowered and supported. Research shows that when African American males connect early to support programs, they are more likely to succeed. Recent research shows 86 percent of Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) participants graduate, exceeding the average five-year graduation rate for African American men in the U.S (Landis, 2019). Support programs provide resources that aid in African American males' success. When African American males find mentorship and guidance on a college campus, they feel empowered and supported. This support leads to developing a sense of belonging through support. There are checks and balances when students have mentors on campus, and they can talk through irrational decisions. Having a relationship with faculty and staff can also lead to recommendations to serve as student representatives on essential committees, nominations for student leadership positions, and resources that are not always known by the general public. This network also leads to research opportunities and internships. The more wrap-around services provided, the more likely universities are to retain African American males; undoubtedly, these services build self-esteem, a stronger sense of belonging, and academic support.

Institutional Practices

The low graduation rates of African American males are attributable to various causes. Many of these males come from low-income families, often with fewer educational books in the home, and neither parents nor grandparents attended college. These students often come from neighborhoods with needy school districts taught by inexperienced and under or uncertified teachers who are underpaid. High school teachers in some classes do not have the resources to provide an adequate education. Graduating from high school is a significant milestone, but unfortunately, African American males are graduating from high school unprepared for higher education rigor (Harper, 2012). These same students have to deal with stereotypes of being disobedient, aggressive, dumb jocks, and criminals. Frequently school administrators give up on African American males at an early age because of stereotypes, a systematic mindset that leads to the school-to-prison pipeline. Research indicates a strong correlation between high school preparation, socioeconomic status, standardized admissions test scores, and student success in higher education (Cuyjet, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Strayhorn, 2012).

A college degree provides the main pathway for social mobility in the US, and few investments yield a higher return; over a lifetime, a college degree will generate well over twice the income as that of comparable investments in stocks, bonds, gold, or housing (Greenstone et al., 2013). The lack of resources provided once students of color are accepted becomes a barrier, which often becomes a huge stumbling block for student success. African American males make it to the college campus, and a large number meet the benchmarks to receive diversity and academic scholarships that cover the majority

and, in some cases, all of their university bills. Although scholarships cover tuition, room and board, and federal aid, scholars are often not enough and leave students with a false sense of hope. Many African American males are first-generation and may not understand the amount of aid needed to succeed through the school year. Unfortunately, students enroll at institutions that they cannot afford, even with aid and scholarships. One year of college's price is the equivalent of 84% of the income for the lowest 25% of US families (Goldrick-Rab, 2016).

Resources

Education is an expense many cannot afford – the net costs of higher education (including tuition, fees, room, and board) have increased in recent decades, while inflation-adjusted income levels for US families have remained mostly flat for all but the population's top quintile (Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Most African American students do not have the funds to purchase the books to succeed in the classroom, and many of their families cannot provide any extra support outside of their award packages. Caught between work, debt, and rising expenses, many students struggle to afford basic necessities, finding themselves hungry and “food insecure” – unable to obtain “an adequate amount of food and sufficient nutrition” (Morris et al., 2016, p.376). Countless students are often on-campus hungry because their basic meal plans do not provide enough funding options to eat multiple meals a day. Food insecurity among university students is high and associated with academic performance. Weaver et al. (2020) found that food insecurity increased the odds of being among the lower 10% GPA and reduced the odds of being among the upper 10% GPA. Food insecurity is higher in some groups than in others – African Americans, Hispanics, commuters, students with partial or no

meal plan, and student recipients of financial assistance (Weaver et al., 2020). These same students are already dealing with the stress from home, feeling as if college might not be the right place for them, and sometimes the first time being on their own and away from family. This shortage of aid leads students to figure out options for covering the remaining bills, food, books, and additional needs. The extra stress of just trying to survive can often become too much. At the behavioral level, time spent securing food may hinder academic success. Food insecure students often must make special efforts to obtain money to purchase food or effort to obtain food such as selling textbooks or other possessions or services, joining groups that provide free meals, attending events where food was served, and visiting family for weekend meals (McArthur et al., 2018).

African American males are resilient and are fully capable of doing college-level coursework. Even when entering college campuses with below benchmark test scores, they can complete the work and succeed. The reason many African American males leave college campuses centers around issues outside of the classroom. Research indicates that it is the influences outside of the college classroom that impacts their success. The lack of finances, not having the funds to purchase textbooks puts them at a disadvantage from being competitive within the classroom and not registering for the following semester because of large account bills. Several students leave campuses because of family issues back home, so they return to assist the family. Unfortunately, in some cases, disciplinary disputes become the deciding factor of removal. Research repeatedly shows that African American males often stop out not because of academic issues but because of factors such as debt, stress, or the lack of resources. “African American men are subjected to a certain amount of environmental stress from racism with regard to organizational

practices, faculty attitudes, and other activities in their collegiate experiences” (Watson, 2006, p. 124).

In addition, African American males frequently deal with issues at home while away at college. The stressors often cause students to lose focus on school and develop feelings of guilt because of their physical distance. They experience an overwhelming sense of remorse because they are on a safe campus with meal options daily while family members are home dealing with unsafe environments or lack of food sources. African American men are frequently denied the means of achieving the dominant American culture’s manifestations of manhood (e.g., economic success, head-of-household status, and traditional civic involvement), they adopt alternate behaviors to demonstrate manhood attainment—behaviors that are often at odds with those of the dominant culture (Lee & Bailey, 1999). The stress leads to mental instability and could cause these young men to feel withdrawn or have other mental issues. Culturally African American males do not seek counseling when dealing with stress, depression, or mental issues. In the Black community, members are often taught to deal with mental issues or pray about them (Vance, 2019). The lack of black males or people of color in general representation in PWI’s counseling centers adds to the unwillingness of sharing personal stories with someone who can relate to the culture or understand the struggle.

Racial Climate

There is often a lack of opportunities to build authentic mentors or relationships across campus because of negative stereotypes about black men being dangerous, uneducated, or unable to graduate. African American students at PWIs face alienation, perceived hostility, racial discrimination, and lack of integration into the broader

environment (Allen, 1992; Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2013). These implicit biases often impede African American males' ability to find mentors, advisors, and confidants to assist with stressful situations. For instance, some peers and faculty members believe that African Americans are lazy, dangerous, and uneducable; minorities are generally not viewed as gifted or high-achieving (Freeman, 1999; Cuyjet, 2006, Strayhorn, 2009). Studies have shown that Black men, especially those who attend predominantly white institutions (PWIs), face significant obstacles when establishing meaningful relationships with others on campus. In a study by Strayhorn (2008), even high achieving black collegians reported feeling undue pressure to prove themselves intellectually at PWIs. African American males have continually reported that they experience negative stereotypes and challenges associated with their superior academic abilities (Strayhorn, 2009). African American males are also more likely to feel that the campus is unjust, hostile, alienated, and less supportive of their needs (Harper, 2013; Schmader et al., 2001; Person & Lenoir, 1997). Some scholars speculate that the lack of black faculty and students to draw potential role models leads to the inability to find supportive relationships with the African American male students' success.

Faculty, staff, and administrators can harbor stereotypes of African American men from the general media and the images they see on campus. "However, every one-on-one interaction with an African American male, particularly if the resulting impression is a positive one, helps to break down the negative stereotypes and open individuals' eyes to the falsehood of such negative stereotypical images" (Cuyjet, 2006, p. 13). Additionally, the impact of strong, supportive relationships with individual Black male students relies on support and advice found in Tinto's Social Integration Theory. The Integration theory

explains that there must be positive social and academic integration. In a previous study, a low-income, first-generation African American male said it best “My academic advisor is all I’ve got – she’s my advisor, my mentor, my guide, my friend” (Strayhorn, 2008, p. 40).

Social Interaction

Unfortunately, African American males have the most challenging times with persistence. Although there are signs of improvement, the data shows that African American males lag in completion. Alexander W. Astin’s student development theory of student involvement implies that the more involved students are on campus, the more likely they are to be successful and graduate. There are numerous examples of social support for African Americans in colleges, such as social clubs and organizations, intramural sports, and residence hall interactions. African American students may receive financial support for their education through scholarships, Pell grants, fellowships, or even loans. However, African American males may need to find other forms of support that academic institutions cannot offer, leading to their departure.

In theory, getting involved sounds excellent for that full-time college student who only has classes and social engagements to focus on, but many African American males have to work more than 20 hours a week. Many students of color also live off-campus with limited access to transportation, making it difficult for students to return to campus for evening or late events. On the other hand, there are signs of rewards for African American males who can get involved, especially in leadership roles. Studies show a direct contribution to their ability to thrive, especially when involvement included leadership opportunities. Campus involvement contributed more to African American

students thriving than seen in any other group, including white students. However, not all involvement experiences were associated with higher grades and success. On average, African American males who participated in non-historically black fraternities earned lower grades than their same-race male peers who did not join fraternities (Schreiner, 2014).

In contrast, African American males seemed to benefit greatly from involvement in student government and volunteer activities. Studies have shown that the same students, when involved in organizations such as Black Student Union, Historically Black Fraternities, and other majority-black organizations, do better. “For example, Black fraternities and Black student organizations at White institutions exist because there is a need for African American students to express their unique experiences and issues in a platform that will be taken seriously” (Watson, 2006, p. 115). In part, they develop practical skills and enhance self-esteem, independence, and ability to work in groups.

Studies also showed the importance of getting African American males involved early in the process of learning.

“For instance, pre-college, summer bridge, and federal TRIO programs may prove useful in increasing the satisfaction levels of Black men in college as they are superior to other outreach strategies in their ability to facilitate meaningful, lasting relationships between students and members of the campus community”

(Strayhorn, 2011, p. 37).

Pre-college programs can make an essential contribution to the improvement of postsecondary success rates among African American males. Men of color who participate in these programs are associated with higher grades in college. The pre-

college programs allow students to make connections with faculty and staff early in the process. Undoubtedly, pre-college bridge programs have proven to help minority students navigate their way to and through postsecondary education (Fenske et al., 1997; Strayhorn, 2011; Bir & Myrick, 2015). Research also shows that if these scholars are actively involved in clubs and organizations, they gain more from their college experiences, access exclusive social networks, and acquire practical competencies critical to success during and after college.

Spirituality

The development of spirituality for African Americans goes beyond slavery and the middle passage. In Africa, spirituality represented a oneness of self, communion with the earth, the gods who nurtured and maintained the land, and the peoples and societies who converged to foster and populate their respective beliefs. Indeed, African spirituality was embedded in Africans' cultural, political, social, and religious lives before the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade, insomuch that during the Middle Passage, it was their spiritual connectedness that they held onto (Newman, 2016). To the enslaved Africans, maintaining a spiritual identity was one of the most important activities they could do. For the first century and a half of the slave experience in America, there was but a small number of enslaved Africans who were converted to Christianity, let alone received a significant amount of Christian instruction and knowledge about the religion (Young, 2011). African slaves had no physical items that reminded them of the freedom they had on the continent. The one item that could not be stolen or left behind was their spiritual identity. Enslaved Africans created communities, and while not necessarily sharing the same cultural background or religion, still connected within the compass of spirituality.

Newman (2016) states that “remnants of African spirituality live on through the songs, praise, worship, prayers, and services held at Black churches every Sunday” (p. 28).

Watson’s (2006) study found the following:

“For many African Americans, whether Christian or not, religion is often viewed as subsuming spirituality, and it reflects the manifestations of formal theological beliefs and activities as well as cultural rituals and, historically, the adoption of Western philosophy into African-centered practices for many who share a group identity.” (p. 113)

According to Herndon (2003), African Americans rely heavily upon spirituality as a coping mechanism to deal with stress. Jang (2004) analyzed data from a national survey of African American adults and concluded that African Americans who are religiously committed tend to report lower levels of distress than those who were not. African American college men may seek out social support in the form of spiritual and religious exercises, more so than some may think. “Overall, studies have shown that spirituality has a significant role in helping African American college students cope with stress at the collegiate level” (Riggins et al., 2008, p. 72).

Several studies have compared African American male spirituality to their white counterparts, and according to the literature, more research is being done to look at how religion and spirituality factors in the African American male college students’ grit. The research found that religious participation and spirituality largely account for African American college students’ coping strategies and problem-solving styles (Constantine et al., 2002). Watson argued that spiritual identities among African American men are sensitively linked with perceptions of campus environments. Therefore, spirituality is

highly perceived for coping with the variety of stresses African American males might have on campus (Dancy, 2010).

For African American males, spirituality and religion have a vast place with the grit and mindset to move through adversity. Even if not formally attending church or religious group affiliation, African American males find ways to connect with their spirituality by listening to online sermons, gospel music, or attending bible studies with their friend circles. Many students neither participate in organized religious activities nor identify themselves as religious yet attribute great importance to spiritual beliefs and practices (Dalton, 2001).

There is an increasing desire to understand the impact of religion and spirituality and African Americans' tenacity to maneuver through adversity in more recent years. Some researchers have begun exploring the spiritual nature of college students in general (Bryant et al., 2003; Love 2002; Watt, 2003, Dennis et al., 2005, Riggins et al., 2008, Dutta & Singh, 2017), and several others have examined spirituality as it pertains to various aspects of African American students' lives, such as identity development (Stewart, 2002) and coping (Constantine et al., 2002). The phenomenon of spirituality and religion in college students' lives often permits them to share their unique and very personal perspectives with others in that collegiate community (Watson, 2006).

Spirituality and College retention

Literature concerning student success and faith involvement revealed that religion, spirituality, and faith positively impact student success. Early studies such as McEwen et al., (1990), identified spirituality as one of the nine essential factors related to African American college students' developmental tasks that "either have not been

addressed adequately in the psychological theories or need to be considered in more complex ways” (p. 430). The literature’s common themes show that spirituality and prayer are used as guidance and coping mechanisms. It is spirituality in a social context and social support of religious institutions. Dalton (2001) states that students who maintain their spiritual development through college incorporate their deepest values and beliefs with career and life plans.

Love and Talbot (1999) suggested that college and university professionals need to

- Reflect on their own spirituality
- Be open to the various notions of spirituality that students bring to campus
- Acknowledge that some students are deeply emotionally invested in the spiritual elements of their lives
- Admit the need for training to equip them to deal with the spiritual development of the student

“Students’ spiritual reflections and commitments are especially important in helping them identify and commit to future goals and career choices; this makes spirituality an important consideration when assessing the long-range outcomes of higher education” (Dalton, 2001, p. 18). Spirituality may help reinforce an individual’s resilience and grit by helping draw positive meaning from student’s experiences, promoting a sense of coherence, and hope to promote a sense of meaning, well-being, self-acceptance, and social support (Dutta & Singh, 2017).

Summary

Numerous studies have emphasized that African American males have difficulties and challenges that may factor in higher education success (Cuyjet, 2006; Watson, 2006; Harper, 2013; Strayhorn, 2014; Schreiner, 2014; Haywood & Sewell, 2016; Corkindale, 2019). An overview of barriers that have impacted African American males' retention at PWIs is discussed throughout the chapter. Although African American males have experienced significant challenges, they have been successful when connected to resources early in their education journey. Pre-college programs, African American-centered organizations, connections to a mentor, and other social interactions that allow students to be community have positively impacted the retention of African American males attending PWIs. Lastly, African American males use spirituality as a coping mechanism to deal with obstacles that may turn into barriers to their success. Chapter III covers the methodology used for the study as well as the procedures and instruments.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the mixed methods methodology (MMR). For this study, an explanatory mixed methods design was used. The study aimed to gain a broader understanding of the role of spirituality's impact on retaining African American males at a Predominately White Institution (PWI). This MMR approach afforded a deeper understanding of how African American males at a PWI navigate adversity to continue college until graduation. This chapter covers the research plan, including the methodology, study participants, procedures, analysis method, and ethical concerns during this process.

Mixed Methods Definition and Design

A mixed-methods design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study to understand a research problem more completely (Creswell, 2002). Because this study aimed to examine the impact of spirituality on African American males at a Predominantly White Institution, the mixed-methods explanatory design was the most appropriate choice to frame the participants' stories using both a survey instrument followed up with informal interviews. “The rationale for mixing both kinds of data with one study is grounded in the fact that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient, by themselves, to capture the trends and details of a situation” (Ivankova et al., 2006, p. 3).

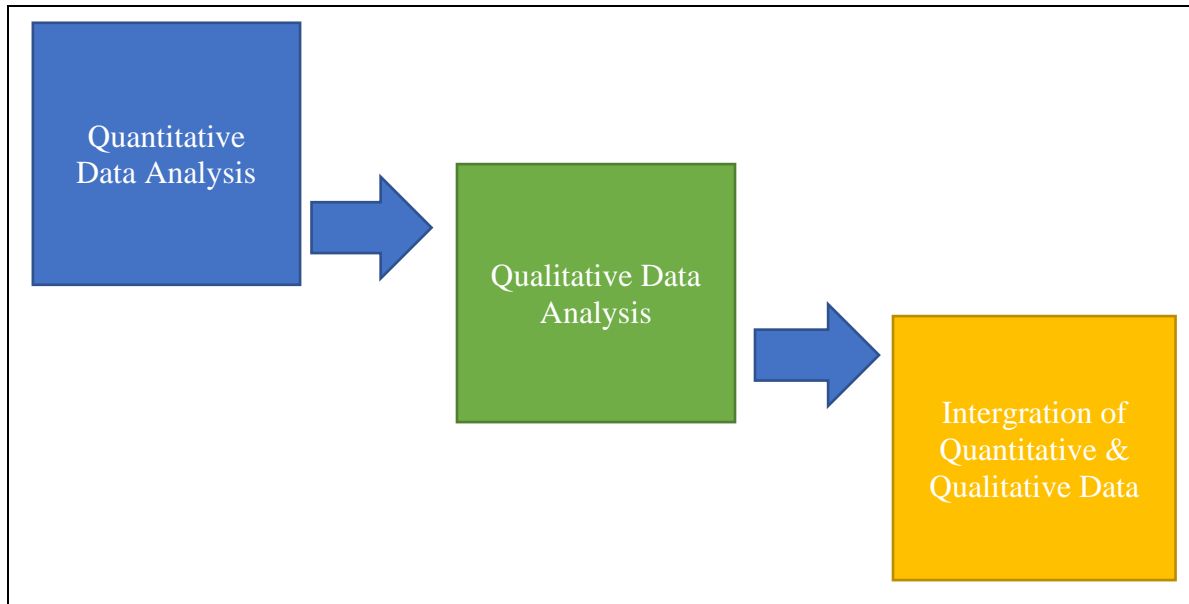
The different approaches for mixed methods design differ in their emphases and share many commonalities (Creswell, 2002). For this study, an explanatory design allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding and tell how spirituality impacts

African American males' retention at a PWI. An explanatory design differs from a parallel design, where several researchers create an initial design from the same set of requirements. Parallel designs in mixed methods studies use quantitative and qualitative data collection in tandem, and then the two databases are integrated. This study had no other studies to share concepts because it was a single study, unlike an exploratory design, where the researcher explores a new phenomenon. The exploratory mixed methods design involves collecting qualitative data and using its results to guide quantitative data collection or design a questionnaire (Creswell, 2002). The researcher in this study sought to understand the level of spirituality of the African American males and then determined the impact of spirituality on their ability to be retained at PWIs.

This study's MMR design rationale was to give a voice to the study participants and allowed the study findings to be grounded in the participant's experiences. The participants' storytelling illustrated how their spirituality impacted their ability to be retained at PWI. The quantitative findings provided the foundation for the level of spirituality of African American male students attending a PWI. Through the qualitative phase, participants were allowed to provide in-depth descriptions of the importance of their spirituality while being students at a PWI and how it impacted their ability to be retained. "Illustration refers to the use of qualitative data to illustrate quantitative findings, often referred to as putting "meat on the bones" of "dry" quantitative findings" (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017, p. 111).

Figure 1

Study Design



QUAN → QUAL

Study Participants

The participants consisted of enrolled African American undergraduate males at a mid-sized, mid-west PWI ($N = 47$; age $M = 21.89$; $SD = 6.30$). The participants ranged years in college from 1 to 5 first year ($n = 14$), second-year ($n = 9$), third-year ($n = 14$), fourth-year ($n = 9$) and fifth year ($n = 1$). Participants were identified and selected with the assistance of the office of institutional research at the selected institution.

Participation in the research was voluntary. The sample for the interviews was a nested sample ($n = 12$) because these participants were drawn as a subset from those who responded to the questionnaire (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

Procedure

This study's procedures included preliminary activity, data collection from the participants, and the collected data analysis. An informed consent form (see Appendix C) was required for each participant. The form explained the purpose of the study, the details of the survey, risks, benefits, assurance of confidentiality, and the option to withdraw at any point. Participants who agreed to an interview received and completed the consent form before participating in phase 2 of the study. Each step is explained in detail in the following sections.

Preliminary Steps

The beginning stages of this study required several actions before the collection of data from participants. Permission for the use of the LAP-R from Dr. Gray Reker, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Psychology at Trent University (Appendix H). Permission for the use of Demographic Information capturing tool and Interview Protocol Spirituality and Black Men instruments from Dr. Michael Herndon, Dr. Reginald K. Riggins, and Dr. ConSandra McNeil (Appendix I, J, & K). The researcher's dissertation committee from Western Kentucky University approved the initial research prospectus and research proposal. Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought from Western Kentucky University and the mid-sized, mid-west Predominantly White Institution. Additional IRB approval from mid-sized, mid-west Predominantly White Institution for access to participants' directory information was sought (Appendix L).

Data Collection

Quantitative data collection procedures began with permission from the university's Institutional Research (IR). After a list of African American males'

demographic information was provided by IR, a participation invitation email was sent to the students (Appendix B). The email contained an explanation of the study and assurance of confidentiality, a consent request, and a link to Western Kentucky University's Qualtrics.com Survey Software. The participants were asked to complete the Background survey and Life Attitude Profile – Revised (LAP-R) (Appendix E & F). In the email, participants had the option to volunteer to participate in the Qualitative portion of the research by emailing the researcher to confirm an interview time.

Once a participant agreed to participate in the Interview Protocol Spirituality and Black Men (Appendix G), a link using SignUpGensius was sent to schedule the interview date and time. Interviews were scheduled in 30-minute time slots. Each interview was recorded using Zoom Video Communication. Following the interviews, the tapes were transcribed for accuracy and attention to detail. Each student received a copy of the transcription for review and made corrections as needed. Using the Creswell Model of Qualitative Data Analysis, raw data was coded for themes.

Institutional Research produced a list of 356 African American males enrolled in the study's time frame. The participants received a total of four emails over three months. There were also limited opportunities for face-to-face recruitment due to the hybrid format of campus operations. A total of ($n = 53$) responded, and of those ($n = 47$) fully completed the survey.

The researcher collected data during the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semester in two phases. Participants responded to a questionnaire (see Appendix E) in the first phase, concurrent with the Life Attitude Profile- Revised (LAP-R, 1999; Appendix F). After the analysis of the quantitative data, the findings were used to inform the next stage. In the

second phase, semi-structured interviews sought to elicit data through a Spirituality and Black male Interview Protocol (Appendix G), administered to a nested sample from the first phase participants.

Due to coronavirus 2019, Covid-19, phase two interviews occurred via Zoom Video Communication format for the interviewer and interviewee's protection. According to the World Health Organization [WHO], 2021, Covid-19 "is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2." Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop severe illness. According to the Center for Disease Control [CDC], 2021, the virus spreads from person to person through close contact (less than 6 feet apart or two arm lengths) mainly by way of "respiratory droplets or small [airborne] particles, such as those in aerosols, produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, talks, or breathes. These particles can be inhaled into the nose, mouth, airways, and lungs and cause infection." In general, symptoms typically begin 4-5 days after exposure, though symptoms can start as early as two days and as late as 14 days after coming into contact with the virus. Therefore, interviews were conducted via Zoom Video Communication format. Interviews were recorded electronically and transcribed using Zoom Video Communication Software and Otter.ai: Transcribe Voice Notes. Each participant interview occurred in a single interview session, and no interviews were conducted without confirming the participants' written and verbal consent.

Instrumentation for Quantitative data

The LAP-R consisted of a 48-item self-report multidimensional measure of discovered meaning and purpose in life and the motivation to find meaning and purpose in life (Reker & Peacock, 1981). It is the product of several refinements based on a combination of theoretical, rational, and factor analytic procedures (Reker & Peacock, 1981). Each item on the LAP-R is rated on a 7-point Likert scale of agreement (1-7), ranging from “strongly agree” (7) to “strongly disagree” (1). The LAP-R is scored and profiled in terms of six dimensions and two composite scales. The coefficients are highly satisfactory, ranging from .77 to .91, and remain consistently high across groups and gender (Reker & Peacock, 1981). The present study retained high internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .89).

The six dimensions are:

1. Purpose (PU)
2. Coherence (CO)
3. Choice/Responsibleness (CR)
4. Death Acceptance (DA)
5. Existential Vacuum (EV)
6. Goal Seeking (GS)

The two composite scales are:

1. Personal Meaning Index (PMI: PU+CO)
2. Existential Transcendence (ET: PU+CO+CR+DA-EV-GS).

Purpose (PU)

The purpose (PU) subscale refers to having life goals, having a mission in life, having a sense of direction from the past, in the present, and toward the future.

Implicit in PU is the notion of what is centrally important in a person’s life.

Coherence (CO)

The coherence (CO) dimension refers to an intuitive understanding of self, others, and life in general. CO gives an indication of a person's belief in his or her reason for existence.

Choice/Responsibleness (CR)

The choice/responsibleness (CR) subscale refers to the perception of freedom to make all of life choices. CR provides an index of the degree to which a person perceives that she or he is directing his or her life.

Death Acceptance (DA)

Death acceptance (DA) refers to having an absence of fear and anxiety about death as well as an acceptance of death as a natural aspect of life.

Existential Vacuum (EV)

The existential vacuum (EV) subscale refers to a lack of meaning, lack of goals, lack of direction, boredom, apathy, or feelings of indifference in life direction.

Goal Seeking (GS)

Goal-seeking (GS) refers to one's getting away from the routine of life, searching for new and different experiences, welcoming new challenges, being on the move, and an eagerness to get more out of life.

Personal Meaning Index (PMI)

The personal meaning index (PMI) composite score (PU + CO) was developed to provide a more focused measure of an individual's personal meaning. PMI refers to having life goals, as well as a mission and sense of direction in life.

Existential Transcendence (ET)

Existential Transcendence is a global measure of attitudes toward life that considers both the motivation to find meaning and purpose. ET is derived from the following formula: $PU + CO + CR + DA - (EV + GS)$.

The instrument consisted of two sections. The first section was a demographic questionnaire that each participant completed, including age, years of completed education, and campus involvement (Appendix E). The second section sought to elicit data related to the research question (Appendix G).

The LAP-R (1999) was developed initially by Reker and Peacock (1981). The 48-item questionnaire was designed for individuals of all ages from adolescence to later adulthood. Because the word spirituality is avoided in the title and content of survey response items, it appears not to bias people to spiritually desirable answers. A fifth-grade reading level is required to complete the approximately 15-20 minute survey. A sample of 750 people, most of whom were 17-24 year old university students, provided normative scores in 1981 (Reker & Peacock, 1981). Coefficients of internal consistency for young adults (17- 27 years old) ranged from 0.77 to 0.91 for all subscale and composite scores. Results of factor analysis lend strong support for the construct validity of the LAP-R. Concurrent validity was established from a series of eight previous studies. The LAP-R is viewed as a valid measure of current and future meaning and purpose in life from these results. It is also predictive of outcome variables, including health and life satisfaction (Reker, 1999). (Table 1) LAP-P Subscores (Dennis et al., 2005) shows a compiled chart of the overall means and standard deviations as they occurred for each of the 6 LAP-R dimensions of three similar studies.

Table 1

LAP-R Subscale Scores for 2005 Study (Predominately African American Sample), 2004 Similar Study (Predominately white Sample), and 1981 National Norms (Predominately white Sample).

LAP – Subscales	* Predominately African American Study Mean (SD)	**Similar Study Mean (SD)	*** 1981 Nat’ l Norms Mean (SD)
Purpose in Life (PU)	43.21 (7.31)	41.55 (8.74)	40.03 (8.44)
Coherence (CO)	42.41 (6.71)	40.68 (6.33)	38.40 (8.30)\
Choice/Responsible (DA)	45.31 (6.44)	44.50 (6.38)	44.94 (6.52)
Existential Vacuum (EV)	30.71 (8.49)	30.58 8.06)	25.92 (8.70)
Goal Seeking (GS)	44.29 (5.61)	42.26 (5.84)	41.15 (7.74)

*Dennis, D., Hicks, T., Banerjee, P., & Dennis, B. (2005). Spirituality among a predominately African American college student population. *American Journal of Health Studies*, 20(3/4), 135–142

**Dennis, D. L., Muller, S. M., Miller, K., & Banerjee, P. (2004). Spirituality among a college student cohort: A quantitative assessment. *American Journal of Health Education*, 35(4), 220-227.

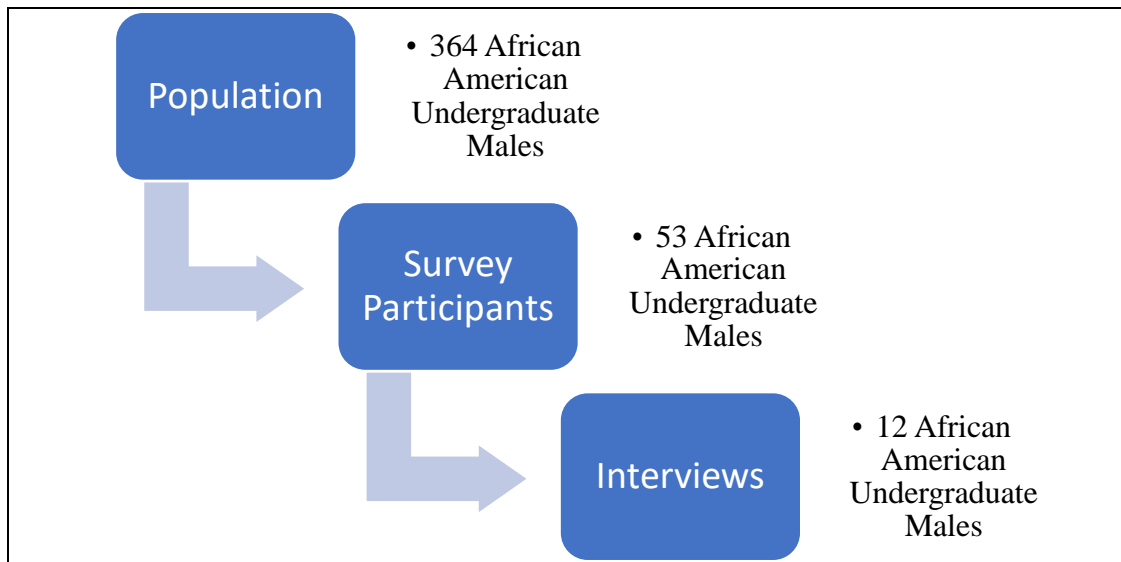
***Reker, G. T. (1999). *The life attitude profile-revised manual*. Peterborough, Ontario: Student Psychologists Press.

Interviews for qualitative data

The interview process strengthened the interpretation of the data. The overarching research questions directed the development of the interview guide and scripts. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants. Personal one-on-one interviews were conducted and audiotaped of 12 students for approximately 30 minutes each. Interviews included open-ended questions (see Appendix G) designed to gather detailed responses leading to an in-depth understanding of the students’ thoughts, feelings, concerns, perceptions, expectations, and experiences.

Figure 2

Data Collection



Note: A breakdown of African American male students' participation in the study's quantitative and qualitative portions. The researcher removed six incomplete survey responses before analyzing data.

Data Analysis Plan

The quantitative data were analyzed to adhere to the Mixed- Methods Research explanatory design, followed by analyzing the qualitative data. Afterward, the datasets were integrated to make relevant conclusions. The LAP-R instrument measured the level of the students' spirituality. The Spirituality and Black male Interview Protocol was used to identify significant themes of the interviews and determine the role of spirituality among African American college males attending a PWI and their impact on those students' retention.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The scoring of the LAP-R is straightforward (Reker, 1992). All items were scored according to the following scoring code:

Strongly Agree = 7

Agree = 6

Moderately Agree = 5

Undecided = 4

Moderately Disagree = 3

Disagree = 2

Strongly Disagree = 1

Scale scores were computed by summing item scores for the respective dimensions. Scale scores for Purpose (PU), Coherence (CO), Choice/Responsibleness (CR), Death Acceptance (DA), Existential Vacuum (EV), and Goal Seeking (GS) range from 8 to 56, respectively. A high total score on each dimension reflects a high degree of the attribute in question. Scale scores for the Personal Meaning Index range from 16 to 112; scale scores for Existential Transcendence can range from 21 minus 80 ($4 \times 8 - 2 \times 56$) to 208 ($4 \times 56 - 2 \times 8$).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Table 2 displays demographic information about the interview participants. The table gives participants pseudonyms, years in college, GPA, major, and age.

Table 2*Interview Participants*

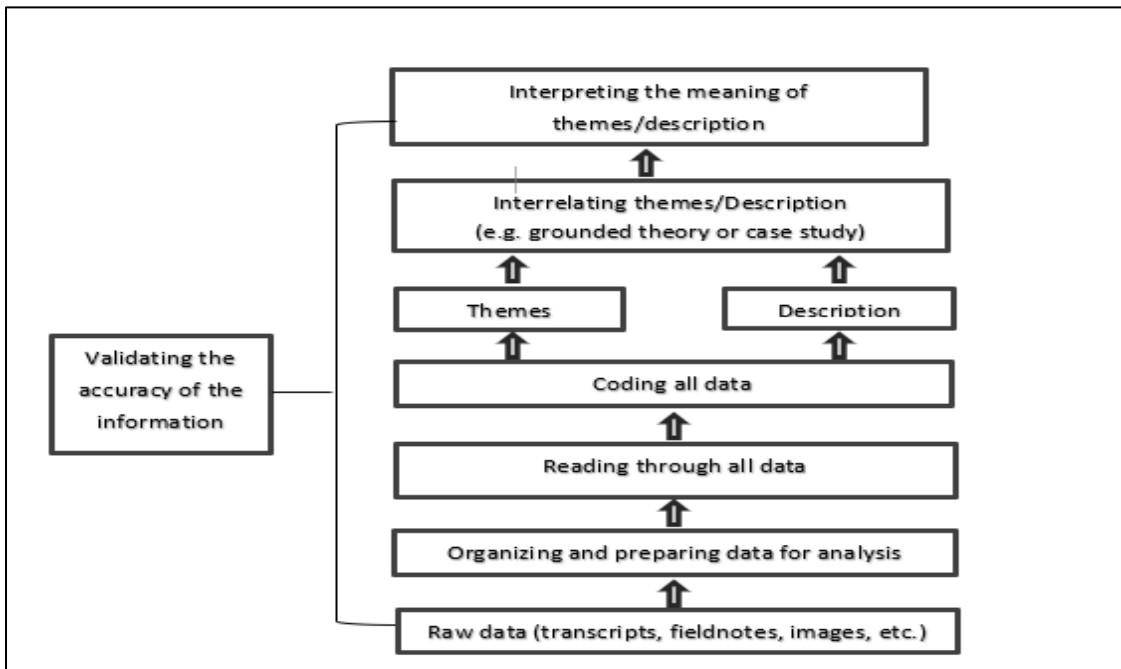
Name	Year	GPA	Major	Age
			Computer Information	
Derek	3	3.82	Technology	20
Bryant	1	3.8	Marketing	18
Antwan	1	2.66	Finance	18
Jayson	4	3.05	Exercise Science	21
Mitchell	1	3.31	Journalism	19
Larry	3	2.66	Exercise Science	20
Davis	2	3.84	Marketing	19
Paul	1	2.8	Computer Science	19
Icon	1	3	Finance	19
Jerome	2	2.93	Musical Theatre	19
Nigel	3	3.41	Exercise Science	19
Calvin	2	3.5	Organizational Leadership	20

Thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data analysis to identify significant themes. The analysis occurred by open and axial coding. Open coding is the investigation and breaking down of collected data. The data were grouped into categories for any themes that emerged. Axial coding entails arranging themes into groupings and categories while analyzing the meanings and interrelationships among categories. After axial coding, themes were used to provide a broader understanding of the quantitative data. In (Figure 3), a model of the six-step process of analyzing qualitative data

(Creswell, 2013). All six steps are vital in the evaluation and the successful interpretation of the research findings.

Figure 3

Creswell Model of Qualitative Data Analysis



Validation Techniques

The results of this study were compared with the results obtained from similar studies measuring related constructs. Because the instruments in this study had been used in previous studies, the survey instruments' content, construct, and criterion validity was established. Content validity is established if the survey measures knowledge of the content domain of which it was designed to measure. Construct validity evaluates whether a measurement tool represents what the research is trying to measure and is central to establishing the overall validity of a method (Middleton, 2020). Criterion validity measures how well one measure predicts an outcome for another measure. The LAP-R was developed to measure six specific dimensions of attitudes toward life (Reker

& Peacock, 1981, p. 24). The LAP-R factor structure has remained invariant across different age groups and sex (Reker & Peacock, 1981).

The basic tenet of mixed methods research suggests that mixed methodologists highlight the strengths and minimize the overlapping weaknesses of each mono-method (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). Onwuegbuzie et al., (2009) identifies nine mixed-methods legitimation types (Sample integration, Inside-outside, Weakness minimization, Sequential, Conversion, Paradigmatic mixing, Commensurability, Multiple validation, and Political). For this study, weakness minimization was used. “The extent to which weakness from one approach is compensated by the strengths from the other approach” (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009 p.1256).

Summary

This study aimed to examine the impact of spirituality on the retention of African American males at a PWI. An overview of the methodology, study participants, procedure, instruments, and data analysis plan is covered in this chapter. A mixed-methods design was utilized to analyze the findings from the two instruments that were used in the study. The Attitude Profile- Revised (LAP-R, 1999; Appendix F), 48-item self-report multidimensional measure of discovered meaning and purpose in life and the motivation to find meaning and purpose in life (Reker & Peacock, 1981). The Spirituality and Black male Interview Protocol (Appendix G). The study’s procedures included preliminary activity, data collection from the participants, and the collected data analysis.

Chapter IV presents the findings of the Attitude Profile– Revised and themes from the Spirituality and Black male Interview Protocol. Chapter V presents an analysis and

synthesis of the research findings. The chapter also answers the research questions that guide this study, conclusions, and implications for further research.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

This study was to examine spirituality on African American male's retention at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used, and involved collecting quantitative data first and then explaining the quantitative results with in-depth qualitative data. In the first quantitative phase of the study, Life Attitude Profile- Revised (LAP-R, 1999; Appendix F), data was collected from undergraduate African American males to measure the level of their spirituality. The second qualitative phase was conducted as a follow-up to the quantitative results. In this phase, results from a nested sample of participants were used to identify themes to help explain the quantitative results. During the explanatory follow-up, major themes of the interviews were used to gain a better understanding of the role of spirituality among African American college male students at a PWI.

Previous research has examined the connection to religious orientation amongst African Americans (Constantine et al., 2002; Dancy, 2010; Herndon, 2003; Watson, 2006). However, few have focused on the relationship between spirituality and academic progress among African American males. Given the attrition rate of this population on college campuses, the need to look at possible strategies that will increase retention is paramount.

Overview of the Study

African American males have faced significant challenges at institutions of higher education over the years. In 2017 a report relating to graduation and retention rates for African American males found that only 34% graduated in six years (U.S. Department of

Education, 2017). This study was an explanatory sequential mixed method design to examine the impact of spirituality on African American males' retention at a PWI. The following research questions were used for this study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of spirituality of African American males attending Predominantly White Institutions?

RQ2: What is the strength of the correlation between Spirituality levels and GPA?

RQ3: How do African American male college students attending Predominantly White Institutions use spirituality as a retention strategy?

RQ4: How do the findings of the qualitative results help to explain the quantitative results?

Descriptive Statistics

The research was administrated at a mid-sized, mid-west PWI. An invitation to participate was sent directly to 364 undergraduate African American male student email accounts provided by the university Institutional Research office. The study was a volunteer study that consisted of two phases. 53 African American males attempted the survey; however, six surveys had to be removed during the data cleaning process due to missing information. According to Garcia, 2019,

“Missing values in dependent variables would often require deleting the entire record since it cannot contribute to the research. Alternatively, too many missing independent variables can also result in no meaningful insights for a particular dependent variable, which would also require deleting the entire record” (4 Ways to Deal with Missing Values, para. 7).

The participants ranged in age from 18 to 48 years old. Participants completed the demographic survey and the Life Attitude Profile - Revised (LAP-R) in the quantitative phases. In the second phase of the study, a nested sample ($n = 12$) of African American males participated in the Interview Protocol Spirituality and Black males.

Of the overall study, 88% of the participants had never been married, 12% were currently married, and 70.37% identified as dependent students. In general, a dependent student is dependent on their parent or guardian for financial assistance and is therefore required to report that income on the FAFSA. The mean age was ($M = 21.89$; $SD = 6.30$), GPA ($M = 3.06$; $SD = 0.59$) and years ($M = 2.44$; $SD = 1.17$). More than half at 61% of the participants lived on campus in university housing, and 83% reported involvement in at least one student organization, with the majority involved in multiple campus clubs, organizations, sports, or fraternities. The participant's involvement ranged from Student Government Association ($n = 3$), Resident Assistant ($n = 3$), Greek Life ($n = 7$), Gospel Choir ($n = 5$), Black Men's Organization ($n = 8$), Presidential Ambassadors ($n = 2$), NAACP ($n = 3$), Campus Ministries ($n = 4$), Athletics ($n = 4$), LGBTQ organizations ($n = 2$), university retention programs ($n = 17$) and no campus involvement ($n = 16$). The results of the participant's demographic survey (Profile of Participants for Study Phase, Appendix L). Table 3 provides summary statistics of the study participants' responses during the quantitative phase.

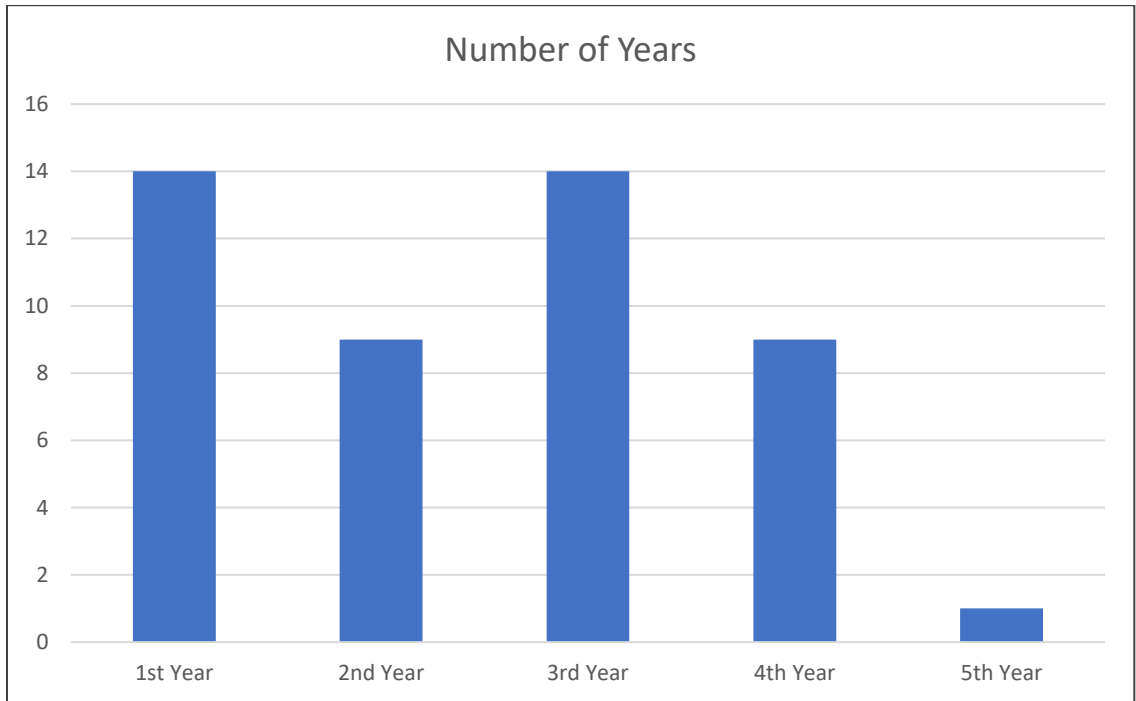
Table 3*Summary Statistics*

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Gender	47	1.14	0.58	1	4
Age	47	21.89	6.30	18	48
Years	47	2.44	1.17	1	5
GPA	47	3.06	0.59	1.66	4
PU	47	41.53	8.08	23	56
CO	47	41.76	8.54	17	56
CR	47	45.17	6.36	29	56
DA	47	35.95	9.19	15	53
EV	47	34.38	7.73	16	49
GS	47	45.38	5.15	5	7
PMI	47	83.29	15.65	40	111
ET	47	84.74	26.51	9	126

The student's classifications were as follows: first-year students ($n = 14$), second-year ($n = 9$), seventeen third-year ($n = 14$), and twelve fourth year ($n = 9$), and ($n = 1$) student had been enrolled five or more years (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

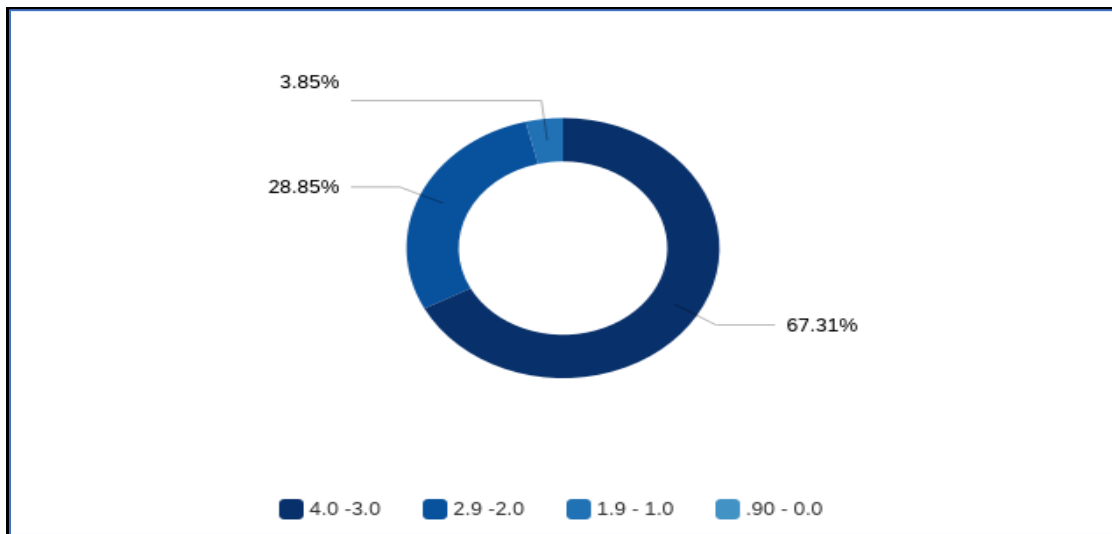
Number of Years in College



Participants were asked to self-disclose their GPA during the demographic phase of the survey. The results showed that 67.31% of participants indicated they had between 4.0 -3.0 GPA, 28.85% had between a 2.9-2.0, and 3.85% self-reported between a 1.9-1.0 GPA. The percentage breakdown of the participant's GPAs are shown (see Figure 5)

Figure 5

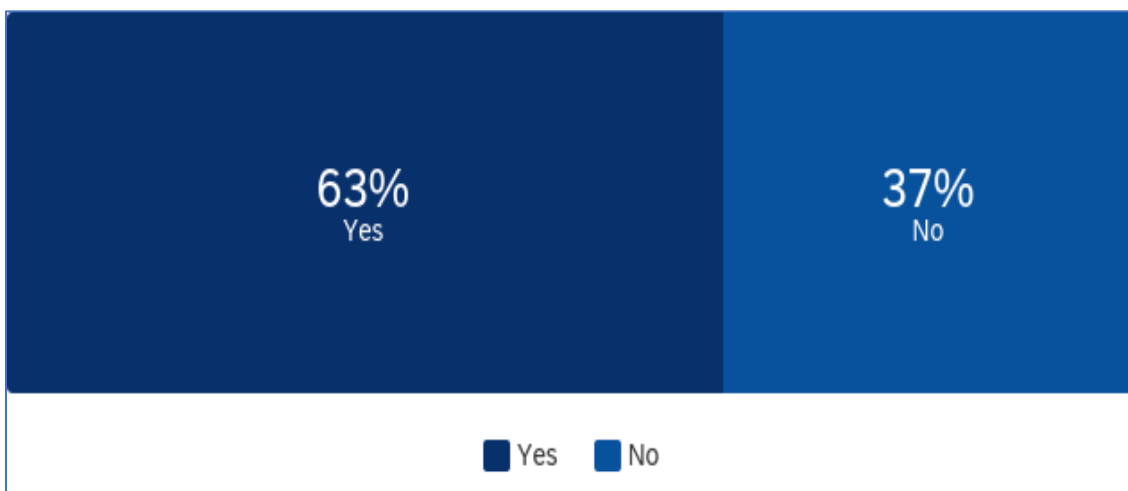
Participants Self Disclosed GPA



Sixty-three percent reported their Pell-eligibility (see Figure 6). Pell-eligible students receive federal grants and loans to assist with their educational experiences.

Figure 6

Pell Eligible



Quantitative

RQ1: What are the perceptions of spirituality of African American males attending Predominantly White Institutions?

Table 4 shows the overall means and standard deviations for the LAP-R six dimensions. In the chart, Goal Seeking (GS) had the highest mean ($M = 45.38$; $SD = 4.15$), and Existential Vacuum (EV) had the lowest mean ($M = 34.38$; $SD = 7.73$). The findings of a high Goal Seeking (GS) score suggest that the participants desire to get away from life's routine and search for new and different experiences, welcome new challenges. They also have an eagerness to get more out of life and be on the move. The lower Existential Vacuum (EV) suggests that the participants have a sense of direction and goals. They have meaning in life, less boredom, apathy, and feelings of indifference.

Table 4

LAP-R Subscale and Composite Scores for African American Males at a Predominately White Institution Student Sample (N=47)

LAP-R Subscale	Questions	Mean	(SD)
Purpose in Life (PU)	1, 2, 5, 18, 26, 31, 37	41.53	8.08
Coherence (CO)	7, 12, 16, 27, 29, 35, 38, 46	41.76	8.54
Choice/Responsibleness (CR)	3, 11, 17, 19, 23, 30, 39, 45	45.17	6.36
Death/Acceptance (DA)	8, 15, 22, 25, 28, 32, 44, 47	35.95	9.19
Existential Vacuum (EV)	4, 6, 9, 13, 20, 33, 40, 42	34.38	7.73
Goal Seeking (GS)	10, 14, 21, 24, 34, 36, 41, 43	45.38	4.15
Composite Scales			
Personal Meaning Index(PMI)	PU+CO	83.29	15.65
Existential Transcendence (ET)	PU+CO+CR+DA-(EV+GS)	84.74	26.51

RQ2: What is the strength of the correlation between Spirituality levels and GPA?

There was no significant correlation found at the .05 between the measure of Spirituality Levels and GPA. After conducting the Pearson correlation test, a weak, inverse relationship was found between the Personal Meaning Index (PMI) and GPA ($r = -.11$). A weak and inverse relationship was found between Existential Transcendence (ET) and GPA ($r = -.17$).

Qualitative

RQ3: How do African American male college students attending Predominantly White Institutions use spirituality as a retention strategy?

A nested sample ($n = 12$) of African American males volunteered to participate in the qualitative research. The participants scheduled their interviews through a Signup Genius link. Each participant completed a semi-structured interview using the Interview Protocol Spirituality and Black Men. The interviews attempt to extract the impact spirituality has on the retention of African American males attending a PWI. Data source triangulation was used to assure the validity and quality of each interview. Interviews took place over several days at different times throughout the weeks to accommodate participants' schedules. Each participant interview was recorded using Zoom Video Conferencing software, Otter transcribing application was used to transcribe each interview, and the researcher also took field notes during each interview. After transcription and review of notes, and recordings each interview was shared with participants for accuracy. Table 5 provides an overview of the Qualitative participant's ($n = 12$) breakdown by year.

Table 5*Participants by Years in College*

Year in College	n	%	<i>n</i> = 12
1st Year	5	42%	
2nd Year	3	25%	
3rd Year	3	25%	
4th Year	1	8%	
Five or more years	0	0%	

Table 6 displays acts of spirituality the participants reported that they practice daily. These results are similar to themes ascended in a previous study that used the same research instrument, *The Role of Spirituality Among African-American Males attending a Historically Black University* (Riggins et al., 2008).

Table 6*What Acts of Spirituality Do You Practice?*

*Acts	n	%	<i>n</i> = 12
Prayer	9	75%	
Read the Bible	8	67%	
Talk to others	2	16%	
Church Attendance	6	50%	
Meditation	3	25%	
Gospel Music	6	50%	
Positive Affirmations	1	1%	

Note: A list of acts of spirituality that participants practice in their daily life.

The nested sample semi-structured interviews' findings resulted in four themes: 1) spirituality reinforces grit, 2) spirituality provides a sense of purpose, 3) Prayer is used for guidance and as a coping mechanism, and 4) religious institutions provide spiritual support. In the following sections, the researcher describes the themes and uses quotes from the transcripts to connect the overall themes to how spirituality impacts the retention of African American males attending a PWI. The findings discovered parallel and duplicate themes when this research is compared with Herndon's (2003) study and Riggins et al. (2008) study.

Spirituality reinforces grit

Grit is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth, 2016). Grittier students fare better in exams, find a sense of purpose in their desired vocation, and are more optimistic than less gritty students (Duckworth, 2016). The participants implied that their spirituality contributed to their ability to stay grounded during adversity and focused on staying on the path to obtain their degree. Participants shared how their spirituality helps them to deal with the issues such as discrimination, racism, and fear associated with being a black male at a PWI. African American males are also more likely to feel that the campus is unjust, hostile, alienated, and less supportive of their needs (Strayhorn, 2009; Schmader et al., 2001; Cuyjet, 2006). During the interviews, participants shared how their spirituality reinforced their grit to stay at a PWI. Jayson shared how his spirituality keeps him grounded:

My spirituality keeps me grounded and helps me with my thoughts of frustration. You know, I'm paranoid, being a person of color around so many white people. Sometimes I feel with every interaction. There could be something negative that

could happen. So, there's a lot of things I'm conscious about, especially with everything that's going on in the world. My spirituality keeps me from acting out of character and keeps me calm, and it helps me grow as a professional.

Larry stated:

My spirituality helps me stay humble because it is the element that keeps me grounded in life. However, as a black man at a PWI, I have to hold on to my spirituality just a little bit tighter and keep it close.

Yet Bryant stated:

Spirituality helps me to be more calm and relaxed in certain situations and allows me to spread love. Especially when a lot of times, all you're getting is hate because of Caucasian students treating you a certain way just because of your skin color. (...), my spirituality definitely helps me handle situations in a more mature and collective way. If I don't choose to follow those morals, it might result in me lashing out and possibly getting kicked off-campus.

An Antwan stated his spirituality pushes him to be better every day:

It gives me strength, courage, and it allows me to understand that I'm not where I want to be, but I'm definitely not where I used to be. So it gives me courage and encouragement to better myself every day, even though I have made progress.

There's always progress to be made, and so it helps me understand my role as a black man, and it pushes me to be better every day.

Spirituality provides a sense of purpose

In the second theme, participants described spirituality as providing a sense of purpose and motivation that drives them toward a satisfying future primarily shaped by

things they believe in and value. Mitchell, an out of state, first-year student, expressed how his spirituality provided a sense of purpose for him:

Spirituality to me means that you got to speak things into existence. For example, if you want a good grade or get into a class, you got to speak it into existence. Don't speak negatively like, oh, I'm going to fail this quiz. But speak positively like, oh, I'm going to ace this. What you speak shall come.

Larry added:

It keeps me at peace and from overreacting. Using spirituality as a tool helps me measure my milestones and how much I've grown throughout the years at a PWI.

Through the interviews, it was evident that many of the participants had a solid foundation of spirituality, and it played a significant role in their sense of belonging.

Bryant stated:

My parents always raised me in a very spiritual and Christian household. So that basically formed me into the person I am today as far as my values go, the way I speak and carry myself, basically everything I do.

Jayson claimed:

It helps me move in a certain direction, which is forward. I believe in a higher power and following rules to do good. It definitely keeps my moral compass in check and keeps me sane.

Prayer is used for guidance and as a coping mechanism

Spirituality is defined as students' belief in a power beyond themselves, along with a reliance on their beliefs about the meaning and purpose of life as a coping mechanism and a lens through which to view the world (Schreiner, 2014). Specifically, it

has been found that religious participation and spirituality largely account for African American college students' coping strategies and problem-solving styles (Constantine et al., 2002). According to Herndon (2003), African Americans rely heavily upon spirituality as a coping mechanism to deal with stress. Therefore, spirituality is highly perceived as coping with the variety of stresses African American males might have on campus (Dancy, 2010).

Mitchell, coming from a state with more significant numbers of minorities, stated how prayer helps to guide him during times of uncertainty:

You have to stay prayed up because theirs so minimal of us on campus, especially with everything going on in the world with all the police brutality and hate crimes. You never know what might happen, so you got to stay prayed up and praying. I'm new to the state and don't know a lot about the area, so you never know what might happen, like the riots at the capitol. It could happen anywhere, maybe even on campus.

The findings showed that 75% of the participates prayed. Many prayed daily and most multiple times throughout the day.

Paul stated:

I pray to God every day. It's the first thing I do when I wake up and one of the last things I do at night. I try to read the bible daily. I focus my mind on God when I'm worried he is truly my sense of relief and joy. Even when I think there is no way I can find joy in a situation, I find joy when I focus my mind on him.

It was prayers that helped the students through hard times and kept them grounded and focused. “I pray through the God and bad, and I try to keep that communication, so I have a frame of reference. It creates my perspective of the world.”

Jerome stated:

It’s a huge part of my life. It’s my rock that I lean on. When I feel out of control, I pray and read my bible, and it helps me feel more centered and grounded, and it’s just always been a part of my life.

Religious institutions provide spiritual support

African American college men may seek out social support in the form of spiritual and religious exercises, more so than some may think. All of the participants were able to clearly explain their views on the difference between spirituality and religion. Although several considered themselves not to be religious, all considered themselves to be spiritual. Many of the participants spoke to the importance of having a community of spiritual support. During the interviews, Davis, one of the young men, stated that “Church is my foundation ever since I was younger, I’ve always been in church with my family, and it’s kind of like my rock.” It was evident that through spiritual practices and connections, African American males build networks of support. “Essentially, churches provide African American college students with another family and a sense of home that they need to survive and succeed both in college and in life” (Donahoo, & Caffey, 2010, p.101).

Paul was very passionate about the connections he’s made at his church. He claimed:

The people at my church I met through school. Now I have gotten used to seeing them every Thursday and Sunday, and if I don't go to school here anymore, I will never see them again. So for me, it's a reminder that I'm not here alone.

Antwan stated:

My church family is very influential to me. They are my cheering crowd in my corner. They uphold me to the expectations that they know that I am capable of achieving, so they are always there to help push me.

Derek added:

Church allows me to reconnect with individuals who look like me and gain a positive message during such a rough time. Church has had a positive impact, such as allowing me to connect with my own culture and get out of some of the superficial stuff I've experienced at a predominantly white college.

It has been said that "African Americans remain committed to church involvement and religious practice, in part, due to the range of individual benefits and supports that these opportunities provide" (Donahoo & Caffey, 2010, p.79). During the conversation, Davis proudly explained, "Every church I have attended always had a college program or college community. I feel like that played a major role in me going to college and staying in college and wanting to finish college." It was a sense of pride for this young man, but it also showed his church family's impact on his college experience and how he felt he owed it to them to complete.

Many of the participants shared they did not attend church regularly or have a religious institution but still found a way to connect through campus events or online streaming for spiritual growth. Mitchell stated:

I go to church here or there, and I watch it online. It's like the pastor is always speaking to me and knows what's going on in my life. Church reconnects me with God when I feel like I'm off track. It keeps me headstrong and grounded.

Through the interview, Derek indicated that although he was not religious, he has enjoyed attending events through the African American programming office on campus:

I have gotten a lot more exposure to spirituality being around church functions at (name of institution). I've been to church services with African American Student Initiatives, and that's really giving me a lot of exposure to church, more often than I would have with my personal family. It's really just allowed me to gain a positive mindset and realize that we can get through it because we have hard times. Even though sometimes we might feel alone during those challenges, we always have somebody looking over us to help us push through. That's kind of helped me academically and push through some of my college courses and major challenges.

Lastly, Bryant shared that:

Attending the bible studies at the Baptist Center on campus helped keep me on track with my faith and spirituality. It definitely helps keep me on the right track as far as getting everything done that needs to be done.

RQ4: How do the findings of the qualitative results help to explain the quantitative results?

Based on the results of the interviews with the participants, the results aligned with the Quantitative findings (see Table 7). The participants had a firm understanding of their goals, life mission, and a sense of direction for their life.

Table 7*Joint Display of Quantitative Results with representative Quotes*

Composite Scales	QUAL	QUAN
<p>Personal Meaning Index(PMI)</p> <p>Personal meaning is a dual-component construct defined as having life goals, having a mission in life, having a sense of direction from past, present, and future, and having a logically integrated and consistent understanding of self, others, and life in general. The PMI is derived by summing the Purpose and Coherence dimensions.</p>	<p>My spirituality gives me strength, courage, and it allows me to understand that I'm not where I want to be, but I'm definitely not where I used to be. So it gives me courage and encouragement to better myself every day, even though I have made progress.</p> <p>Spirituality to me means that you got to speak things into existence. For example, if you want a good grade or get into a class, you got to speak it into existence. Don't speak negatively like, oh, I'm going to fail this quiz. But speak positively like, oh, I'm going to ace this. What you speak shall come.</p> <p>It helps me move in a certain direction, which is forward. I believe in a higher power and following rules to do good. It definitely keeps my moral compass in check and keeps me sane.</p>	<p>Mean</p> <p>83.29 (15.65)</p>
<p>Existential Transcendence (ET)</p> <p>Existential Transcendence is a global measure of attitudes toward life that takes into account both the degree to which meaning and purpose has been discovered and the motivation to find meaning and purpose. ET is derived by summing Purpose, Coherence, Choice/Responsibleness, and Death Acceptance and subtracting Existential Vacuum and Goal Seeking scores.</p>	<p>When I'm going through challenges and things, I do look to God to provide me with guidance, especially for the past few years and with everything going on with COVID. My spirituality does play a role in allowing me to continue to get through hard times.</p>	<p>84.74 (26.51)</p>

Table 7 (Continued)

Joint Display of Quantitative Results with representative Quotes

My faith in God helps me remain in school. I pray and try to hear from him to see what he wants me to do and where he wants me to go. If I'm doing something I believe is what he wants me to do, I'm going to continue to do it even if it gets hard because I believe this is what he's telling me to do.

It helps me move in a certain direction, which is forward. I believe in a higher power and following rules to do good. It definitely keeps my moral compass in check and keeps me sane.

Participants were able to articulate how their spirituality help to keep them centered and focused. Many shared that through their spiritual beliefs in God, there is a purpose for their life. The results aligned with the qualitative findings that African American males attending a PWI have a higher level of spirituality based on the results of LAP-R findings of a PMI score of (83.29) out of 112 (Table 7) shows a joint display of the findings of the results.

Summary

This chapter summarized the collected data, how it was analyzed, and explained the study's results. The participants in the study were African American males that ranged in age from 18 to 48 years old. All participants attended the same mid-size midwest PWI during the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters. Forty-seven participants fully completed the demographic survey and the Life Attitude Profile - Revised (LAP-R) in the qualitative phases. In the second phase of the study, a nested sample of 12 African

males participated in the Interview Protocol Spirituality and Black males. The demographic questionnaire (see Appendix E), Reker and Peacock's (1981) Life Attitude Profile- Revised (LAP-R, 1999; Appendix F), and the Interview Protocol Spirituality and Black Men instruments (Appendix G) were analyzed to answer the research questions that guided this study. Discussion of results, conclusions, implications, and recommendations are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Study

This study aimed to examine the impact of spirituality on African American male's retention at a PWI. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design involved collecting quantitative data first and then explaining the quantitative results with in-depth qualitative data. In the first quantitative phase of the study, Life Attitude Profile- Revised (LAP-R, 1999; Appendix F), data was collected from undergraduate African American males to measure the level of their spirituality. The second qualitative phase was conducted as a follow-up to the quantitative results. In this phase, results from a nested sample of participants were used to identify themes to help explain the quantitative results. In this explanatory follow-up, the interviews' major themes were used to understand spirituality's role among African American college male students at a PWI.

Previous research has examined the connection to religious orientation among African Americans (Constantine et al., 2002; Dancy, 2010; Herndon, 2003; Watson, 2006). However, few have focused on the relationship between spirituality and academic progress among African American males. Given the attrition rate of this population on college campuses, the need to look at possible strategies that will increase retention is paramount.

This study sought to answer four research questions. The first research question asked was: What are the perceptions of spirituality of African American males attending Predominantly White Institutions? The second research question posed was: What is the strength of the correlation between Spirituality levels and GPA? Third, the following research question was: How do African American male college students attending

Predominantly White Institutions use spirituality as a retention strategy? And the final question was: How do the findings of the qualitative results help to explain the quantitative results?

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was utilized to understand better the impact of spirituality on retaining African American males at a PWI. Three survey instruments were used to attain quantitative data. The first was the Background survey, the second was the Reker and Peacock (1981) Life Attitude Profile- Revised, and the third was the Interview Protocol Spirituality and Black Men instruments. To collect qualitative data, the researcher collected semi-structured interviews.

This chapter includes a discussion of the results that were presented in Chapter IV. The discussion provides findings and conclusions to the aforementioned research questions, identifies significance and implications, and recommends further study ideas. After the discussion, implications and limitations will be discussed. Finally, the chapter closes with suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

A mid-size Midwest PWI close to a metropolitan city provided participants for this study. Participants were African American males that ranged in age from 18-48 years old. Additionally, 63% of the participants were Pell-eligible students who received federal grants or loans to assist with the cost of their education. The group was highly active on campus, with 83% of the participants involved in one or more registered student organizations, retention programs, or team activity. Although student engagement for African American males does not significantly influence students' GPA, it impacts

building a robust supportive environment (Strayhorn, 2008). However, student involvement and a supportive environment increase the likelihood of retention.

Regarding spirituality, the LAP-R survey's quantitative findings indicate that the perceptions of spirituality for African American males attending a PWI measured a reasonably high degree of spirituality based on the mean of the PMI score of ($M = 83.29$; $SD = 15.65$) out of 112. The scale has a range for the PMI from 16 to 112 (Reker, 1992). These findings compared to three early studies revealed a similar comparison to the PMI score of ($M = 85.61$; $SD = 12.91$) for the Dennis et al. (2005) study of predominately African American college students and a significant increase than the PMI mean score ($M = 74.62$; $SD = 12.38$) of Dennis et al. (2004) predominately white study. These seeming differences suggest that for African American males, the current study ($M = 83.29$; $SD = 15.65$) and ($M = 85.61$; $SD = 12.91$) for the Dennis et al. (2005) have higher levels of spirituality. Spirituality for African Americans connects to African roots passed down through generations. "Remnants of African spirituality live on through the songs, praise, worship, prayers, and services held at Black churches every Sunday" (Newman, 2016, p. 28).

Relating to logotherapy, Frankl posits that a vital part of the human condition represents the strength of motivation to find meaning and purpose. In the present study, the quantitative findings indicate this to be true for these African American males. The findings also showed a slight increase than the original study Reker's 1981 study with a PMI mean score of ($M = 78.43$; $SD = 15.86$), indicating that African American males at this PWI have a relatively high perception of spirituality. In Reker's study, 750 people,

most of whom were college students 17-24 years of age. In the present study, 47 African American males attended a PWI 18-48 in age.

Reker (1992) states, “Existential Transcendence is a global measure of attitudes toward life that takes into account both the degree to which meaning and purpose has been discovered and the motivation to find meaning and purpose” (p.19). The scale has a range for the ET from 80 to 208 (Reker, 1992). These findings compared to three early studies revealed a lower comparison to the ET score of ($M = 84.74$; $SD = 26.51$), compared to ($M = 92.58$; $SD = 25.10$) for the Dennis et al. (2005) study of predominately African American college students, the PMI mean score ($M = 143.60$; $SD = 18.82$) of Dennis et al. (2004), and ($M = 92.47$; $SD = 31.18$) of Reker & Peacock, (1981).

The LAP-R survey results indicated that the participants demonstrated a moderate level of spirituality, which means understanding life goals, sense of direction, and self-understanding. Although a lower score than other studies, this group of African American males still have a significant ET level. Individuals with higher ET levels have “a new perspective on life, has internalized successes, has risen above the failures of living, has a good understanding of self,and views life as inevitable and meaningful” (Reker, 1992, p. 19). These findings coincided with the themes from the interviews. In particular, spirituality provided a sense of purpose, and prayer is used to guide life and coping mechanisms.

The participants spoke confidently of how they used their spirituality to stay in the well of God’s purpose for them to be in college until completion of a degree. This study's findings aligned with the literature’s familiar themes: spirituality and prayer are used as guidance and coping mechanisms, and spirituality in a social context and social support of religious institutions (Constantine et al., 2002; Herndon, 2003). In addition, their spirituality helped reinforce resilience and grit by helping draw positive meaning

from their experiences, promoted a sense of coherence, and a sense of meaning, well-being, self-acceptance, and social support (Dutta & Singh, 2017).

As it relates to the strength of the correlation between Spirituality levels and GPA, the data did not suggest a strong correlation in this sample. There was no significant correlation found between the measure of Spirituality Levels and GPA. Although the focus of this study was not GPA during the interviews, participants shared stories about their experiences as African American males that aligned with the research that impacted African American males' success. All ($n = 12$) of the participants talked about the classroom racial climate and how their spirituality played an essential role in keeping them centered and grounded. African American students at PWIs face alienation, perceived hostility, racial discrimination, and lack of integration into the broader environment (Allen, 1992; Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2013; Griffith et al., 2019). There were many references to being the only or one of few in many of their academic programs and classroom settings. The participants talked about a sense of belonging related closely to organizations and programs centered around black culture, spirituality, and African American student retention.

Bryant stated:

Spirituality helps me to be more calm and relaxed in certain situations and allows me to spread love. Especially when a lot of times, all you're getting is hate because of Caucasian students treating you a certain way just because of your skin color. (...), my spirituality definitely helps me handle situations in a more mature and collective way. If I don't choose to follow those morals, it might results in me lashing out and possibly getting kicked off-campus.

The participants talked about the lack of representation of Black Faculty and Staff on campus and how it impacted their overall experience. Allen (1992) conducted a study comparing PWIs and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) African American student outcomes. Results indicated that African American students who enrolled at PWIs experienced lower academic achievement because they had lower academic aspirations and were doubtful about completing their degree. In addition, African American students at PWIs reported less favorable relationships with faculty members and fellow students than students at HBCUs. Derek talked about “Fake Administration” vs. “Real Administration.” He described fake administration as being African Americans in leadership roles who did nothing to enhance the experience of the African American students at the PWI. “These administrators hold seats at tables but do nothing to better the minority students. We need more real administrators who care about the students and get to know us.” Tinto (1999) states, “Students are more likely to stay in schools that involve them as valued members of the institution. The frequency and quality of contact with faculty, staff, and other students have repeatedly been shown to be independent predictors of student persistence” (p. 5). Research also indicated that support programs provide resources that aid in African American males’ success (Landis, 2019). When African American males find mentorship and guidance on a college campus, they feel empowered and supported—often leading to higher academic success. Derek went on to state:

I’ve been to church services with African American Student Initiatives, and that’s really giving me a lot of exposure to church, more often than I would have with my personal family. It’s really just allowed me to gain a positive mindset and

realize that we can get through it because we have hard times. Even though sometimes we might feel alone during those challenges, we always have somebody looking over us to help us push through. That's kind of helped me academically and push through some of my college courses and major challenges.

Lastly, prayer was the highest of all other acts of spirituality that the participants practiced. Although most disclosed they prayed daily and multiple times, the daily prayer seemed to increase when participants doubted themselves or needed a source of strength. Herndon (2003), African Americans rely heavily upon spirituality as a coping mechanism to deal with stress. Paul stated:

I pray to God every day. It's the first thing I do when I wake up and one of the last things I do at night. I try to read the bible daily. I focus my mind on God when I'm worried he is truly my sense of relief and joy. Even when I think there is no way I can find joy in a situation, I find joy when I focus my mind on him.

After analyzing the qualitative data, the findings indicated that African American male college students use spirituality as a retention strategy at PWIs. From the interview protocol, *Spirituality and Black Men* (Riggins et al., 2008) emerged four themes that interpreted how African American males attending PWIs use spirituality as a retention strategy. The emerging themes were 1) spirituality reinforces grit, 2) spirituality provides a sense of purpose, 3) prayer is used as a form of guidance in their life and a coping mechanism to deal with the pressure of attending a PWI, and 4) religious institutions provide spiritual support.

Generally speaking, it could be argued that students found spiritual support that helped their retention as PWI students. Participants talked about the hatred,

discrimination, and racism they often encountered while on campus and how their spirituality kept them grounded and focused on the bigger picture of attaining their degree. Frankl's (1963) Logotherapy believes that humans have the potential to experience meaning under any and every circumstance treating emotional difficulties as a way to establish a sense of meaning and purpose in life. Their spirituality provided them a sense of purpose and motivation to know that they were doing it for a higher purpose. That God had provided them the opportunity to attend college, and because of that, they can push through adversity and have the strength to speak to their future. Spirituality provided the participants with a calming that allowed them to focus and feel grounded and centered. The participants spoke to prayer, and other acts of spirituality helped their mental well-being, which gave them strength to preserve the goal of completing their degree. Grit is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Duckworth (2016) argues that grittier students find a sense of purpose in their desired vocation and are more optimistic than less gritty students. In the present study, the participants also relied heavily on their spirituality to reinforce their grit to achieve academic success.

The third theme was found to be relating to prayer as a guidance mechanism and coping strategy. Praying throughout the day helped the participants maneuver through difficult situations and stay calm during challenging times. For instance, Icon, one of the participants, stated, "I pray every day when I wake up and when I go to sleep. I pray about my future, school, academics, and just life in general." It was evident that prayer as an act of spirituality was a prominent factor in African American males attending PWIs. Church, choir, bible study, campus sponsor religious programs, and social gatherings

allow students to connect with support systems that encouraged, prayed, and motivated them to stay focus and preserve through difficult situations. Mitchell explained:

Spirituality to me means that you got to speak things into existence. For example, if you want a good grade or get into a class, you got to speak it into existence. Don't speak negatively like, oh, I'm going to fail this quiz. But speak positively like, oh, I'm going to ace this. What you speak shall come.

The literature on prayer as a guiding and coping strategy implies that religious participation and spirituality largely account for African American college students' coping strategies and problem-solving styles (Constantine et al., 2002; Dancy, 2010; Herndon 2003). As it relates to religious institutions as a place to provide spiritual support, the findings here aligned with the literature. Studies suggest that "African Americans remain committed to church involvement and religious practice, in part, due to the range of individual benefits and supports that these opportunities provide" (Donahoo & Caffey, 2010, p.79). Herndon (2003) suggested that African American males build support networks through spiritual practices and connections. In the present study, some similarities included the support that church and religious communities provided. For example, Bryant shared, "attending the bible studies at the Baptist Center on campus helped keep me on track with my faith and spirituality."

It was important for many participants to seek connections to religious organizations and campus programs to stay connected to their faith while away from home. Davis stated, "Church is my foundation ever since I was younger, I have always been in church with my family, and it is kind of like my rock." He shared about the college programs his home church offered that prepared him through college tours and

workshops. Several spoke to watching their home church live through social media or connecting with classmates to join local congregations. However, not all of the participants had positive experiences with religious institutions. One participant spoke to his negative experience with church and his upbringing as a gay black male. He mentioned that although he was raised in the church, he no longer participates in religious institutions but still believes in God and uses his spirituality daily. A few others spoke to the belief that churches were corrupted because they are manufactured religious institutions. People can have a deep sense of spirituality without formal religious participation (Walker & Dixon, 2002).

When the quantitative findings were merged with the qualitative results, the PMI and ET scales suggest that African American males have relatively high spirituality levels. The participants used their spirituality as a source of strength, courage, and moral compass during adversity. Their spirituality guided their direction of life and allowed them to focus on goals for their future. Faith in God gave African American males a positive outlook on challenges they encountered while at a PWI and allowed them to discover meaning and purpose in their journey to graduation.

The qualitative results were consistent with the quantitative findings that African American males have a slightly significantly higher level of spirituality, and it is used as a strategy to enhance the student grit. The scales suggest four themes: spirituality reinforces grit, spirituality provides a sense of purpose, Prayer is used for guidance and as a coping mechanism, and religious institutions provide spiritual support. Participants shared through conversations their ability to use their spirituality to preserve adversity. (Grit) defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth, 2016). They

were able to find meaning (logotherapy) and purpose in their struggle to what they started and be retained at the PWI that lack the understanding of African American culture.

Logotherapy believes that human life has meaning and long to experience their own sense of life meaning while there is the potential to experience meaning under and every circumstance. Young et al. (1998) spirituality has been shown to involve a sense of meaning and purpose within one's life. Furthermore, religion and spirituality served as critical buffers against many students' challenges while pursuing their career goals and aspirations on a predominantly White university campus (Constantine et al., 2002).

The participants shared in-depth the challenges they faced as an African American male attending a PWI. Each one of them was able to articulate the importance of their spirituality and having a spiritual foundation. The interpretation of this study's qualitative results shows the significance of the acts of spirituality that tend to be associated with the foundation of African American males' ability to persevere through adversity, racism, discrimination, and other difficult situations experienced at PWIs.

Significance and Implications

While this study was limited to one mid-size midwest PWI, the study contributes to the existing literature on spirituality and African American male retention. In comparison to previous studies, Dennis et al. (2005) predominately African American college students, Dennis et al. (2004) predominately white study, and the original Reker's 1981. The findings of earlier studies appear to be in general agreement with current study findings that African American males at this PWI have a relatively high perception of spirituality compared to the previously mentioned studies PMI means. Through the Interview Protocol, Spirituality and Black Men emerged four themes that interpreted how

African American males attending PWIs use spirituality as a retention strategy. The study's mixed-methods findings suggest that if PWIs provided resources and programs that enhance and support African American males' spirituality, there should be a positive relationship in retaining African American males at PWIs.

The results of this study have implications that when African American males are connected to spiritual resources, they stay grounded and focused. Spirituality is a tool used to aid in the retention of African American males at PWIs, and the institution must find ways to link those students early in their experience on campus to find connections and a network of support. Individuals who work directly with African American males must support and encourage acts of spirituality. Universities must be open to spiritual development and support for African American males and provide resources beyond religious affiliations. Lastly, student affairs professionals need professional information and training related to spirituality and spiritual development as a coping mechanism to handle adversity.

Theoretical Implications

This study used the theoretical framework of Logotherapy (Frankl, 1963) and Grit (Duckworth, 2016). Logotherapy's spiritual dimensions is one of meaning. That human life has meaning and that humans have the potential to experience meaning under any and every circumstance. At the same time, Grit is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals. This research indicated that the perceptions of spirituality for African American males attending a PWI measured reasonably high. The foundation of spirituality and spiritual acts strengthens African American males' ability to stay grounded while finding meaning and purpose during challenging situations. The

participants implied that their spirituality contributed to their ability to stay grounded during adversity and focused on staying on the path to obtain their degree. Their spirituality became a beckon of strength, courage and provided a sense of purpose and motivation that drives them toward satisfying future goals.

Practical Implications

African American college men may seek out social support in the form of spiritual and religious exercises, more so than some may think. Walker et al. (2002) contend that spirituality is a private experience that one does not have to connect to any particular religion or community of faith. Through spiritual practices and connections, African American males build networks of support. In personal experience, it was typical for a group of African American males to pray for each other if needed on campus. Prayer and church were a part of the experience of growing up black, and that did not change because we went away to college. It was the belief that God was the source of strength, and regardless of what obstacle may come their way, they could handle it through faith and belief in a higher power. In some small way, it was the thread that linked the black community together.

In discussion with African American males who attended PWIs, many contribute their ability to finish their degree to their connections with faith-based organizations on their campus that kept them grounded. Several reflected on their experiences in the gospel choir or other spiritual organizations and acts that provided the resources and connections they needed to preserve through the difficult situations they encountered at their respected PWI. Religious institutions provided spiritual support, social networks, and a family resemblance while away from home. “Students’ spiritual reflections and

commitments are especially important in helping them identify and commit to future goals and career choices; this makes spirituality an important consideration when assessing the long-range outcomes of higher education” (Dalton, 2001, p. 18).

This research gives campus leadership a foundation to build support systems for African American males on their campuses. University Leadership at PWIs should consider providing resources and opportunities for spiritual connections for African American males early in their academic careers. Consider the beginning of semesters and during periods that could be considered stress, such as midterms and finals. Love and Talbot (1999) suggested that college and university professionals need to reflect on their spirituality, be open to various notions of spirituality that students bring to campus, and acknowledge that some students are deeply emotionally invested in the spiritual elements of their lives. Lastly, admit the need for training to equip them to deal with the student's spiritual development.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are as follows:

- The length of the LAP-R survey was a limitation. Although the survey was only 48 items adding the demographic survey at the beginning of the Qualtrics form caused some students to stop the survey before completing it.
- Participants might interrupt the qualitative questions differently based on their religious affiliation and understanding of spirituality.
- The PWI selected for this study was on a hybrid class schedule because of Covid-19. Students admitted to having zoom and email burnout, which resulted in low responses to the survey.

- The campus was operating on a reduced capacity with little face to face. The remote learning structure did not provide the researcher options outside of email to recruit participants for the study.
- Due to Covid-19, all interviews for data collections were limited to phone and zoom video conference platforms.

Recommendations for Further Study

This work would benefit from additional research exploring African American males' experiences at PWIs that impact their spirituality. These experiences include an intentional survey of students living on campus, commuter students, campus involvement in student organizations and Greek life, Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion support programs. It is important to note that participant's ages ranged from 18-48 years old. It might be interesting to make a comparison between traditional and non-traditional students. Also, further studies should consider exploring the impact of campus climate, institution location, financial resources (diversity scholarships), and campus support services that provide religious and spiritual programmatic offerings have on the student's spirituality levels. Lastly, it would be beneficial to have a comparison group such as students who are on academic warning, probation, or suspension.

Summary

African American males have had little to no improvement in six-year graduation rates over the last 15 years. This study aimed to examine the impact of spirituality on African American male's retention at a PWI. Though, past studies have focused on the relationship between spirituality and academic progress among African American males. This study aimed to contribute to the research of the impact spirituality has on retaining

African American men at PWIs. In conclusion, the study showed a slight significance in African American males' perception of spirituality at a PWI. However, there was no significant correlation between levels of spirituality and GPA. Participants undoubtedly articulate the importance of spirituality through the qualitative phase in their experience of being retained until completion at a PWI. The challenge for future researchers will be to use this study's results to determine additional ways to support African American males' spiritual connections to improve their retention at PWIs.

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APPENDIX A
Institutional Review Board Approval



*INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY*

DATE: July 21, 2020

TO: Carlous Yates, Ed.D.
FROM: Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1623492-1] Spirituality and its effects on retention: A sequential explanatory design mixed-methods study on the retention of African American Males attending a Predominantly White Institution.

REFERENCE #: IRB 21-007
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: July 21, 2020
EXPIRATION DATE: November 15, 2020
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a *signed* consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of November 15, 2020.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Robin Pyles at (270) 745-3360 or irb@wku.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

APPENDIX B

Participant Invitation

Participant Invitation Letter

Dear NKU Scholar,

My name is Carlous B. Yates, and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at WKU. I am studying the role of spirituality in the retention of African American males at a Predominately White Institution. As such, I am writing to invite you to be a participant in the study. If you agree to participate in this study, please read the informed consent and acknowledge your willingness to participate.

You will be asked to complete demographic information and answer the Life Attitude Profile- Revised questionnaire. The questionnaire will take about 10 – 15 minutes. There are no anticipated discomfort or risks associated with this data collection. This survey will be anonymous. Additionally, you will have the option to be interviewed as part of the study. The interviews will last 45-60 minutes. Interviews will be scheduled via zoom and recorded. The information will be used to look for themes in how spirituality has an impact on the retention of African American males at a Predominately White Institution.

Please remember this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate in the interview phase of the research or have any questions about the study, please email me at carlous.yates183@topper.wku.edu.

Thanks for your time, and I appreciate your responses.

Sincerely,

Carlous B. Yates

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent



INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Spirituality and its effects on retention: A sequential explanatory design mixed-methods study on the retention of African American Males attending a Predominantly White Institution.

Investigator: Carlous B. Yates, WKU Educational Leadership Doctoral Program, carlous.yates183@topper.wku.edu

Faculty Advisor: Randall Capps, WKU Organizational Leadership/ Management, Randall.capps@wku.edu

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Western Kentucky University. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project.

You must be 18 years old or older to participate in this research study.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have. If you then decide to participate in the project, please sign this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. You should keep a copy of this form for your records.

- Nature and Purpose of the Project:** This study explores the role of spirituality in the retention of African American males at a Predominantly White Institution. This study will provide insight into how spirituality has a positive or negative correlation to the retention of African American Males at Predominantly White Institutions.
- Explanation of Procedures:** The protocol consists of two phases. The first phase will comprise a demographic questionnaire, concurrent with the Life Attitude Profile- Revised (LAP-R;1999) administered to participants via email. The survey takes approximately 15 minutes. In the second phase, participants will be asked to participate in semi-formal interviews are expected to last 45-60 minutes, depending on participant responses. Due to Covid-19, phase two interviews will take place via zoom or similar virtual format for the interviewer and interviewee's protection. Each conversation will be recorded and transcribed.
- Discomfort and Risks:** The study places participants in little to no risk.
- Benefits:** This study will provide insight into how spirituality has a positive or negative correlation to the retention of African American Males at Predominantly White Institutions.
- Confidentiality:** The information obtained from the interviews has the potential of identifying participants. The data will be maintained and kept by the researcher only. Identities will be omitted from any external use of the research. If needed, participants will be allowed to choose a pseudonym (different name or alias) to be used in research data. Records will be viewed, stored, and maintained in private, secure files only accessible by the P.I. and advising faculty for three years following the study, after which time they will be destroyed.

WKU IRB# 21-007
Approved: 11/02/2020
End Date: 07/14/2021
EXPEDITED
Original: 7/21/2020

6. **Refusal/Withdrawal:** Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

Signature of Participant

Date

Witness

Date

- I agree to the audio/video recording of the research. *(Initial here)* _____

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT
THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY
THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Robin Pyles, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-3360



WKU IRB# 21-007
Approved: 11/02/2020
End Date: 07/14/2021
EXPEDITED
Original: 7/21/2020

APPENDIX D

Institutional Research Letter of Approval



Shawn J. Rainey, Ed.D.
Executive Director
Planning and Institutional Research (PIR)
Division of Strategic Planning and Implementation
Northern Kentucky University

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Western Kentucky University and
Northern Kentucky University

Members of the IRB committees,

This letter indicates the willingness of the Northern Kentucky University's Office of Institutional Research to support the dissertation work of Carlous Yates by providing directory information for the undergraduate African American male population at NKU.

Shawn J. Rainey

Shawn J. Rainey, Ed.D.
Executive Director of Planning and Institutional Research

APPENDIX E

Demographic Information

Demographic Information

Name:

Preferred Name:

Institution Currently Enrolled:

Major:

GPA:

Number of Years in College:

Number of Credit Hours:

Gender:

Age:

Dependent Student:

Independent Student:

Marital Status:

Pell Eligible:

Hometown:

Do you live on campus?

Mailing Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Campus Involvement:

APPENDIX F

LAP- R Instrument

LIFE ATTITUDE PROFILE-REVISED (LAP-R)

© Gary T. Reker

This questionnaire contains a number of statements related to opinions and feelings about you and life in general. Read each statement carefully, then indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree by circling one of the alternative categories provided. For example, if you **STRONGLY AGREE**, circle **SA** following the statement. If you **MODERATELY DISAGREE**, circle **MD**. If you are **UNDECIDED**, circle **U**. Try to use the undecided category sparingly.

SA STRONGLY AGREE	A AGREE	MA MODERATELY AGREE	U UNDECIDED	MD MODERATELY DISAGREE	D DISAGREE	SD STRONGLY DISAGREE
<hr/>						
1. My past achievements have given my life meaning and purpose.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D SD
2. In my life I have very clear goals and aims.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D SD
3. I regard the opportunity to direct my life as very important.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D SD
4. I seem to change my <u>main</u> objectives in life.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D SD
5. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D SD
6. I feel that some element which I can't quite define is missing from my life.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D SD
7. The meaning of life is evident in the world around us.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D SD
8. I think I am generally much less concerned about death than those around me.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D SD
9. I feel the lack of and a need to find a real meaning and purpose in my life.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D SD
10. New and different things appeal to me.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D SD

	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
	STRONGLY	AGREE	MODERATELY	UNDECIDED	MODERATELY	DISAGREE	STRONGLY
	AGREE		AGREE		DISAGREE		DISAGREE
11. My accomplishments in life are largely determined by my own efforts.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
12. I have been aware of an all powerful and consuming purpose towards which my life has been directed.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
13. I try new activities or areas of interest and then these soon lose their attractiveness.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
14. I would enjoy breaking loose from the routine of life.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
15. Death makes little difference to me one way or another.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
16. I have a philosophy of life that gives my existence significance.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
17. I determine what happens in my life.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
18. Basically, I am living the kind of life I want to live.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
19. Concerning my freedom to make my choice, I believe I am absolutely free to make all life choices.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
20. I have experienced the feeling that while I am destined to accomplish something important, I cannot put my finger on just what it is.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
21. I am restless.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
22. Even though death awaits me, I am not concerned about it.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD

	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
	STRONGLY	AGREE	MODERATELY	UNDECIDED	MODERATELY	DISAGREE	STRONGLY
	AGREE		AGREE		DISAGREE		DISAGREE
23. It is possible for me to live my life in terms of what I want to do.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
24. I feel the need for adventure and "new worlds to conquer".	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
25. I would neither fear death nor welcome it.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
26. I know where my life is going in the future.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
27. In thinking of my life, I see a reason for my being here.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
28. Since death is a natural aspect of life, there is no sense worrying about it.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
29. I have a framework that allows me to understand or make sense of my life.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
30. My life is in my hands and I am in control of it.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
31. In achieving life's goals, I have felt completely fulfilled.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
32. Some people are very frightened of death, but I am not.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
33. I daydream of finding a new place for my life and a new identity.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
34. A new challenge in my life would appeal to me now.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
35. I have the sense that parts of my life fit together into a unified pattern.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD

	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
	STRONGLY	AGREE	MODERATELY	UNDECIDED	MODERATELY	DISAGREE	STRONGLY
	AGREE		AGREE		DISAGREE		DISAGREE
36. I hope for something exciting in the future.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
37. I have a mission in life that gives me a sense of direction.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
38. I have a clear understanding of the ultimate meaning of life.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
39. When it comes to important life matters, I make my own decisions.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
40. I find myself withdrawing from life with an "I don't care" attitude.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
41. I am eager to get more out of life than I have so far.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
42. Life to me seems boring and uneventful.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
43. I am determined to achieve new goals in the future.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
44. The thought of death seldom enters my mind.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
45. I accept personal responsibility for the choices I have made in my life.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
46. My personal existence is orderly and coherent.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
47. I accept death as another life experience.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD
48. My life is running over with exciting good things.	SA	A	MA	U	MD	D	SD

APPENDIX G

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol Spirituality and Black Men

- Q1. Describe the role spirituality plays in your life.
- Q2. In your opinion, is there a distinction between spirituality and religion? If so, please explain.
- Q3. Describe the role of spirituality in your academic life.
- Q4. In what ways does your spirituality assist you as a man of color on a Predominately White Campus?
- Q5. What acts of spirituality do you practice? How often?
- Q6. How does your faith in God affect your ability to remain in school?
- Q7. Describe the influence of your house of worship in your ability to remain in school?
- Q8. Please provide any additional information you wish to share on this topic.

APPENDIX H

LAP-R Instrument Permission

From: Gary Reker <greker@trentu.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, July 1, 2020 11:01 AM
To: Yates, Carlous, B <carlous.yates183@topper.wku.edu>
Subject: Re: Research Instrument Permission

Hello Carlous,

Attached is information on the LAP-R. You have my permission to use the scale in your research. Also, I will attach a copy of my Spirituality Scale. You might be interested in it as well.

All the best with your project.

Cheers, Gary Reker

From: Yates, Carlous, B <carlous.yates183@topper.wku.edu>
Sent: June 25, 2020 1:23 PM
To: Gary Reker <greker@trentu.ca>
Subject: Research Instrument Permission

Hello Dr. Reker,

My name is Carlous Yates, and I am a doctoral student at Western Kentucky University, completing my dissertation in Organizational Leadership. I am writing to ask written permission to use the Life Attitude Profile- Revised (LAP-R) instrument in my doctoral research study.

My research will be a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study that will explore the role of spirituality in the retention of African American males at a Predominately White Institution. I want to use the instrument under the following conditions:

- I will only use the instrument for my research study and will not sell or use it for any other purpose.
- I will include a statement of attribution and copyright on all copies of the instrument.

If you have a specific attribution statement that you would like to add, please provide it in your response.

- At your request, I will send a copy of my completed dissertation to you upon completing the work or giving a hyperlink to the final manuscript.

I would also appreciate receiving copies of supplemental materials that would help with administering the test and analyzing the results, (1) the test questionnaire, (2) the standard instructions for administering the test, and (3) scoring procedures.

If you do not control the copyrights for these materials, I would appreciate any information you can provide concerning the proper person or organization I should contact.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replying to me through email.

Sincerely,

Carlous B. Yates
Doctoral Candidate
Western Kentucky University

APPENDIX I

Instrument Permission

From: Herndon, Michael <mherndon@vt.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 24, 2020 8:08 PM
To: Yates, Carlous, B <carlous.yates183@topper.wku.edu>
Subject: RE: Research Instrument Permission Request

Hello Carlous,

I am glad to hear that you are completing your dissertation on this topic, especially in these challenging times. You are doing much needed and important research that will inform many stakeholders!

Yes, you have my permission to use the interview protocol and the demographic tool in your study. I wish you the absolute best. Let me know if I may be of further assistance.

Best regards,

Michael Herndon

From: Yates, Carlous, B <carlous.yates183@topper.wku.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 24, 2020 5:40 PM
To: Herndon, Michael <mherndon@vt.edu>
Subject: Research Instrument Permission Request

Hello Dr. Herndon,

My name is Carlous Yates, and I am a doctoral student at Western Kentucky University, completing my dissertation in Organizational Leadership. I am writing to ask written permission to use the Demographic Information capturing tool as well as your Interview Protocol Spirituality and Black Men instruments in my research study from *The Role of Spirituality Among African- American College Males Attending A Historically Black University*.

My research will be a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study that will explore the role of spirituality in the retention of African American males at a Predominately White Institution. I want to use the instruments under the following conditions:

- I will only use the instruments for my research study and will not sell or use it for any other purpose.

- I will include a statement of attribution and copyright on all copies of the instruments.

If you have a specific attribution statement that you would like for me to add, please provide it in your response.

- At your request, I will send a copy of my completed dissertation to you upon completion of the work or give a hyperlink to the final manuscript.

If you do not control the copyrights for these materials, I would appreciate any information you can provide concerning the proper person or organization I should contact.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replying to me through email.

Sincerely,
Carlous B. Yates
Doctoral Candidate
Western Kentucky University

APPENDIX J

Instrument Permission

From: Reginald Riggins <rigginrk@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 24, 2020 4:49 PM
To: Yates, Carlous, B <carlous.yates183@topper.wku.edu>
Subject: Re: Research Instrument Permission Request

Absolutely!

Best of luck,

Reginald K. Riggins, PhD
Licensed Clinical Psychologist

On Wed, Jun 24, 2020, 4:43 PM Yates, Carlous, B <carlous.yates183@topper.wku.edu> wrote:

Hello Dr. Riggin,

My name is Carlous Yates, and I am a doctoral student at Western Kentucky University, completing my dissertation in Organizational Leadership. I am writing to ask written permission to use the Demographic Information capturing tool as well as your Interview Protocol Spirituality and Black Men instruments in my research study from *The Role of Spirituality Among African- American College Males Attending A Historically Black University*.

My research will be a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study that will explore the role of spirituality in the retention of African American males at a Predominately White Institution. I want to use the instruments under the following conditions:

- I will only use the instruments for my research study and will not sell or use it for any other purpose.
- I will include a statement of attribution and copyright on all copies of the instruments.

If you have a specific attribution statement that you would like for me to add, please provide it in your response.

- At your request, I will send a copy of my completed dissertation to you upon completion of the work or give a hyperlink to the final manuscript.

If you do not control the copyrights for these materials, I would appreciate any information you can provide concerning the proper person or organization I should contact.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replying to me through email.

Sincerely,
Carlous B. Yates
Doctoral Candidate
Western Kentucky University

APPENDIX K

Instrument Permission

From: ConSandra McNeil <consandra.mcneil@jsums.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, June 24, 2020 5:03 PM
To: Yates, Carlous, B <carlous.yates183@topper.wku.edu>
Subject: Re: Research Instrument Permission Request

Yes, I approve. I will let Reggie Riggins know. Best of luck. CM

On Wed, Jun 24, 2020, 4:38 PM Yates, Carlous, B <carlous.yates183@topper.wku.edu> wrote:

Hello Dr. McNeal,

My name is Carlous Yates, and I am a doctoral student at Western Kentucky University, completing my dissertation in Organizational Leadership. I am writing to ask written permission to use the Demographic Information capturing tool as well as your Interview Protocol Spirituality and Black Men instruments in my research study from *The Role of Spirituality Among African- American College Males Attending A Historically Black University*.

My research will be a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study that will explore the role of spirituality in the retention of African American males at a Predominately White Institution. I want to use the instruments under the following conditions:

- I will only use the instruments for my research study and will not sell or use it for any other purpose.
- I will include a statement of attribution and copyright on all copies of the instruments.

If you have a specific attribution statement that you would like for me to add, please provide it in your response.

- At your request, I will send a copy of my completed dissertation to you upon completion of the work or give a hyperlink to the final manuscript.

If you do not control the copyrights for these materials, I would appreciate any information you can provide concerning the proper person or organization I should contact.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replying to me through email.

Sincerely,
Carlous B. Yates
Doctoral Candidate
Western Kentucky University

APPENDIX L

Profile of Participants for Study Phase

Table 8

Profile of Participants for Study Phase I (N = 47)

No.	Major	# Years in College	Age	GPA
1	Finanace	4	34	2.92
2	BSC Respiratory care	3	38	3.41
3	Computer Information Technology	3	20	3.82
4	Organizational Leadership	2	20	3.50
5	Exercise Science	4	21	3.05
6	Marketing	2	19	3.84
7	Sports Business	1	18	2.40
8	Marketing	1	18	3.80
9	Music	2	19	3.40
10	Computer Science	3	21	1.85
11	Journalism	4	21	2.87
12	Finance	1	18	2.66
13	Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering Technology	2	19	3.71
14	Computer Science	1	19	2.80
15	Public Relations	3	21	3.28
16	Theater	3	20	2.78
17	Biology	4	21	2.30
18	Electronic Media & Broadcasting	4	22	3.61
19	Finance	1	19	3.00
20	Physics	4	21	2.56
21	Sports Business and Event Management	2	19	3.42
22	Mechatronics	1	18	2.61
23	Journalism	1	19	3.31
24	Exercise Science	3	21	3.41
25	Electronic Media And Broadcasting	2	19	3.20
26	Musical Theatre	2	19	2.93
27	Electronic Media and Broadcasting	1	19	3.81
28	Journalism	1	18	2.53
29	Social Work	3	21	2.38
30	Accounting	1	18	1.66
31	Exercise Science	3	20	2.66
32	Not decided	1	19	2.26
33	Business Management/Human Resources	4	22	3.39

34	Actuarial Science	3	48	2.69
35	Integrative studies	3	20	2.05
36	Social work	5	27	3.22
37	Economics	4	30	3.97
38	Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering	2	20	3.71
39	Marketing	1	18	3.80
40	Sociology	3	21	3.90
41	Photography	3	42	4.00
42	Engineering Technology	1	19	2.80
43	Journalism	1	19	3.31
44	BFA Acting	2	19	2.54
45	Social Work	4	21	3.13
46	Psychology	3	21	2.51
47	Mass Communications	3	21	3.36

APPENDIX M

Table 9

LAP-R Response Item Scores for African American Males at a Predominately White Institution Student Sample

LAP-R Response Items		N= 47	
Purpose in Life (PU)		Mean	(SD)
1	Past achievements give my life meaning	5.79	1.43
2	I have clear goals and aims	6.11	1.08
5	I have discovered a satisfying life purpose I	5.49	1.54
18	I live the kind of life I want to live	4.67	1.56
26	I know where my life is going	4.67	1.67
31	In achieving life' s goals, I have felt fulfilled	4.53	1.53
37	My mission in life gives me direction	5.85	1.29
48	Life runs over with exciting good things	4.94	1.71
Coherence (CO)			
7	The meaning of life is evident in the world around us.	5.08	1.83
12	I am aware of a powerful purpose toward which my life has been directed	5.39	1.43
16	My life philosophy gives significance to my life	5.51	1.36
27	Thinking of my life, I see a reason for my being here.	5.69	1.46
29	A framework helps me understand life.	5.27	1.4
35	Parts of my life fit in a unified pattern	5.33	1.15
38	I have a clear understanding of the ultimate meaning in life.	4.89	1.64
46	My personal existence is orderly and coherent.	4.89	1.36
Choice/Responsibleness (CR)			
3	Directing life is important.	6.23	1
11	My accomplishments are my effort.	5.69	1.49
17	I determine what happens in my life.	5.33	1.54
19	I am free to make all life choices.	5.39	1.3
23	I can live my life the way I want to.	5.71	0.97
30	My life is in my hands, I am in control	5.27	1.38
39	Regarding important life matters, I make my own choices	5.55	1.16
45	I accept personal responsibility for my own life	6.21	0.94
Death Acceptance (DA)			
8	I am less concerned about death than others	4.13	1.92
15	Death makes little difference to me	3.49	1.92
22	I am not concerned about the inevitability of death		

25	I neither fear death nor welcome it.	5.45	1.39
28	There is no sense in worrying about death	4.88	1.67
32	I am not frightened of death like others	4.67	1.74
44	The thought of death seldom enters my mind.	4.24	1.62
47	I accept death as another life	4.66	1.74

Existential Vacuum (EV)

4	I seem to change my main objectives in life.	3.7	1.71
6	Something is missing from my life.	4.89	1.7
9	I feel a lack of and a need to find real meaning in my life.	3.94	2
13	New activities soon lose their attractiveness.	4.53	1.61
20	I am destined to accomplish something important, but I cannot put my finger on it.	5.14	1.66
33	I daydream of finding a new place for my life and a new identity	4.98	1.62
40	I find myself withdrawing from life with an “I don’ t care attitude.”	3.85	1.99
42	Life to me seems boring and uneventful.	3.21	1.69

Goal-Seeking (GS)

10	New and different things appeal to me	6.19	0.85
14	I would enjoy breal ting loose from the routine of life.	5.45	1.65
21	I am restless.	4.25	1.71
24	I feel the need for adventure and “new worlds to conquer.”	5.45	1.44
34	A new challenge in my life would appeal to me now.	4.88	1.47
36	I hope for something exciting in the future.	6.51	0.71
41	I am eager to get more out of my life than I have so far.	6.38	0.67
43	I am determined to achieve new goals in the future.	6.3	0.78
