A Qualitative Study on African American and Caribbean Black Males’ Experience in a College of Aeronautical Science

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In
Human Development

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April, 2000
Falls Church, Virginia

Keywords: Persistence, Aeronautical Science, African American male, Caribbean black male, Aviation Education, Non-traditional Career Choice
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(ABSTRACT)

This study was designed to examine the experiences of a small group of Black males in a college of aeronautical science, a major traditionally dominated by White males. The study also considered the differences in how African American males and Caribbean black males perceived and acted upon the same experiences. Through a social learning theoretical approach, the study examined the relevant factors, processes, and experiences involved in these Black males’ choice of aeronautical science as a major and piloting as a career. Eleven (11) persisters and 4 non-persisters participated in the study, which centered around a premier aeronautical university in the southeastern part of the United States. Questions guiding the study were: (1) What experiences have been influential in a small group of Black males’ selection of aeronautical science as a major, piloting as a career? (2) What factors outside of and previous to the collegial environment contribute to (and detract from) persistence in pursuit of completion of a major in piloting? (3) What factors in the collegial and occupational environment contribute to persistence in a major in piloting? (4) How do patterns of persistence compare for these Black males at a college of aeronautical science?

Qualitative methodology included both individual in-depth interviews and small focus groups. Participants were recruited through both purposive and snowball samplings as well as volunteering. Criteria for persisters were Black male former aviation students who had already graduated with an aeronautical science degree and pursuing a career as a pilot or Black male students currently enrolled as juniors and seniors, in good academic standing. Non-persisters in this study were Black males who left their aeronautical science major prior to completion. Findings clearly indicated that a number of factors, such as family, individual, social, and environmental, influenced this small group of Black males’ persistence in aeronautical science. Additionally, this study attempted to ascertain the differences and similarities in perceptions and experiences among African American and Caribbean black males. The Caribbean black males in this study did not perceive their race as having a negative impact on their persistence, whereas most of the African American male participants felt their race was a contributing factor to their non-persistence. This study provided the groundwork for the development of a conceptual model of academic persistence with implications for recruiting, retaining, and graduating Black males from a college of aeronautical science.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my son, Derrick Nicholas Greene for his love, unselfishness, and tremendous support during this journey. To Nelson E. Greene, Jr., who demonstrated guidance and wisdom and provided much of the resources necessary for the journey. To my wonderful parents, Charles and Luella Hall, who have prayed, supported, and loved me unconditionally throughout this journey and always knew I could do it. To the best siblings a girl could have: Clarence (Juanita), Dallas (Victoria), Wilson, Charles (Ruby), Ron, and Anita for such love, support, care, patience, and listening ears.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank God Almighty for his love and sacrifice and for making this journey possible.

My deepest gratitude to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Northern Virginia Graduate Center, most especially to a wonderful committee. To Dr. Bert Wiswell, the best advisor a student could have – who encouraged me to be a critical thinker, I thank you for your endurance and dedication in challenging me to make the unclear, clear; to Dr. M.G. Cline for motivating me with his enthusiasm and vast knowledge of qualitative research. I am so grateful that you were on this journey with me and I humbly thank you. To Dr. Marcie Boucouvalas who always asked the tough questions causing me to look deep, to think deep and to feel deep. To Dr. Linda Morris for giving me space and time to explore and be creative, for allowing me to find my own way. To Dr. Roscoe Brown who always gave me encouraging words throughout this process and I thank him for being there for me, for you are a true example of “persistence.” To each of these individuals for shaping and molding me in ways that I initially thought not possible, I am forever grateful. To Michele Eldridge, the foundation of the program, you greeted me with a smile on my first day and you continue in the same way. Thanks for always being there and the tremendous amount of effort you exerted in keeping me on top of deadlines.

To my academic mentors, Dr. Lenora Gant and Dr. James Moore, I can never repay you for your sharing and generosity, so I am asking God to. To Kai Lee, Assistant Director of Admissions, airline pilots Glen Fraser and Ray-Sean Silva for their time and providing such valuable input again and again.

To my dearest friends, Cora “Tess” Spooner, Jennifer M. West, Donita Greene, and Barbara A. Washington, your constant words of encouragement along the way were greatly appreciated. Thanks so much for your support and inspiration.

And finally, to my dear friends, Lt.Col. Dave Beasley, Col. Bill DeShields, and Lt. Col. Ted Lambert; a special thanks for keeping me focused; and Mr. Bill Holton, who at the beginning of this journey, set the bar at excellence. To all of you, your encouragement and words of wisdom will always be remembered. Thanks for being in my corner!
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