

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

by

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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.

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