

A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

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# What Does it Mean to Persist? A Study of Men of Color in Higher Education

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# Background of the Problem

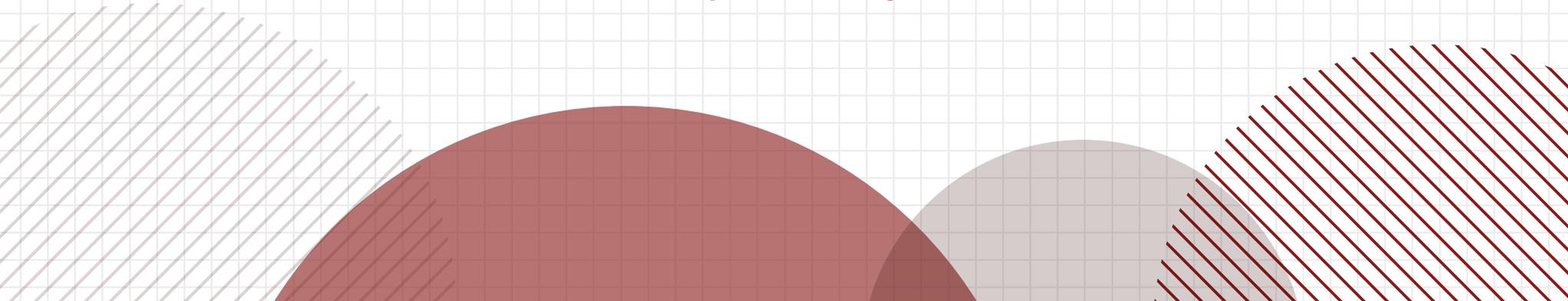
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As of 2008, only 41.6% of 25 to 34 year olds in the United States had attained an associate degree or higher. More alarmingly, only 30.3% of African Americans and 19.8% of Latinos, ages 25 to 34, had attained an associate degree or higher in the United States, compared to 49% for white Americans (Lee & Rawls, 2010). Identifying key concepts as to why students of color, and specifically men of color, are not persisting and achieving at the same rates as their white student counterparts is important if administrators want to begin to solve the problem of providing **equitable support** in order to retain and graduate their male students of color.

The key concepts in the literature point to **a) a need for diversifying the teaching force, b) the importance of role models and mentors who can relate and empathize with the male students of color, and c) the advantages for cultural synchronicity and race-congruency for students and teachers in the classrooms** (Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Irvine, 1988; Leudke, 2017; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Williams, 2015).

It is important to note that in order to fully support students of color in their persistence and achievement in higher education, institutions must acknowledge the **historical marginalization and educational debt** (Ladson-Billings, 2006) men of color enter into with compared to their white student counterparts.

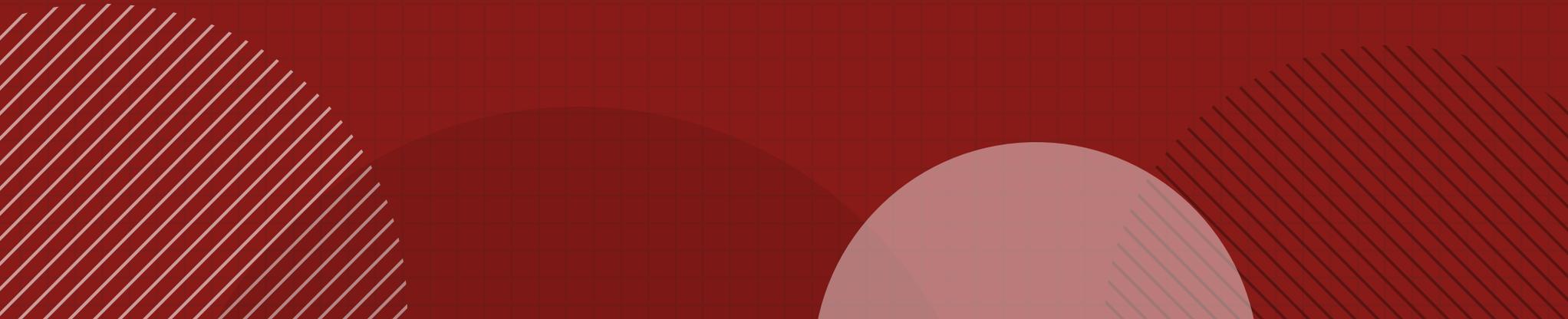
Students of color have been **historically marginalized, misunderstood and misrepresented** in American schools from kindergarten to the college level (Bernal, 2002). By utilizing the key concepts found in the literature, the researchers of this study aim to better understand **how men of color persist in higher education.**



# Purpose of the Study

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Discover what persistence is and looks like for men of color in higher education and to understand mentorship and interactions with K-12 teachers.



# *Quantitative Question:*

Does having same race mentors relate to persistence of men of color in at a private research institution in California?

# *Qualitative Question:*

How do men of color perceive their interactions with K-12 teachers impact their success in higher education at a private research institution in California?

# *Worldview:*

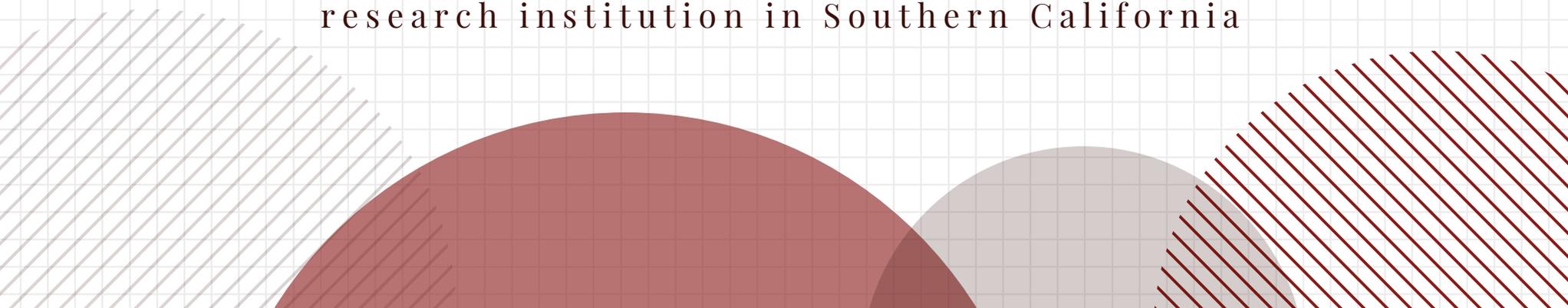
The researchers approach this study from a transformative epistemological perspective (Creswell, 2014). For this study, the action agenda is a need for more mentorship for men of color.

# Research Design

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This study will be conducted in a mixed methods approach. Mixed methods is chosen because of its strength of drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research and minimizing the limitations of both approaches (Creswell, 2014).

In addition, the study will be longitudinal to better track participants through their time in college and to track the development of their relationships with mentors of color. Sample will be selected from men of color at large, private research institution in Southern California



# QUANTITATIVE

- Email 30-item Likert scale survey to all students who self-identify as a male student of color on admissions criteria and share with cultural centers to pass information to students
- In addition to Likert scale questions, the survey will also include open responses for additional comments and explanations to Likert responses

# QUALITATIVE

- From the responses, randomly select and invite 10 students to come in for focus groups and interviews
  - (2) one-hour sessions in groups of 5
  - (10) one-on-one interviews
- Allow for the focus groups and interviews to take on an emergent nature, pursuing sub-questions and relevant topics as they were uncovered in the interview.

# Sampling & Recruiting

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- Sample will be selected from men of color at *large, private, research institution in Southern California*
- A survey, a Likert Scale followed with Open Ended Responses, will be emailed to all students who self-identify as a male student of color, on admissions criteria and share with cultural centers to pass information to students
- From the survey responses, 10 students will be randomly selected to participate in focus groups and interviews
- The goal is to have the stratified sample of 10 students be a representative sample of the men of color at the university. (Johnson & Christensen, 2015).
- Participants will be able to guide the study by filling in open ended responses and participating in focus groups and interviews, as part of the transformative worldview (Creswell, 2014).

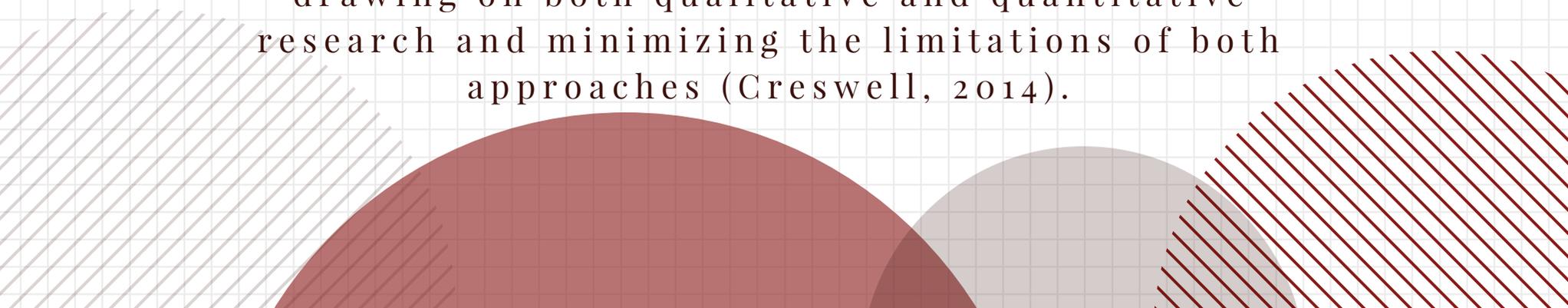
# Data Collection & Instruments/Protocol

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## Why Mixed Methods Approach?

Surveys will allow the researchers to gather data on how many students feel a particular way (Fink, 2013); then focus groups and interviews of the existing participant pool, will allow insight into the experiences of the men of color.

Mixed methods is chosen because of its strength of drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research and minimizing the limitations of both approaches (Creswell, 2014).



## Initial Survey

- Likert Scale Survey followed with Open Ended Response  
Example: Having a same race mentor has contributed towards my success in college.  
Scale: Strongly Disagree (1) - Strongly Agree (5)  
Open Response: Please explain.

## Focus Groups - Interview Protocol

- Allow for the focus group to take on an emergent nature, pursuing sub-questions and relevant topics as they are uncovered in the group session.
- Interviews will follow standardized open-ended interview approach, where there are guiding questions, but participant responses lead the session (Patton, 1987).
- Follow up with participants semesterly through focus groups.

## Follow Up Surveys

Provide a 5 question Likert Scale Survey to check in with the progression of the participants' time in college.

## Observations

While one researcher leads focus group, the second will observe the interactions of the participants with each other and the leading researcher.

# Data Analysis

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## **Triangulation**

Researchers will collect data from multiple sources such as quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and observations (Creswell, 2014). This method of analysis assures credibility, validity, and reliability for mixed methods research. These multiple steps will also help build rapport and relationships with the men of color participants and researchers.

## **Member Check**

The researchers intend to connect with participants numerous times throughout the data analysis process to verify themes and interpretations of data for accuracy and credibility (Creswell, 2014). This process is important to the researchers' transformative worldview of emphasizing and highlighting the perspectives and voices of men of color.

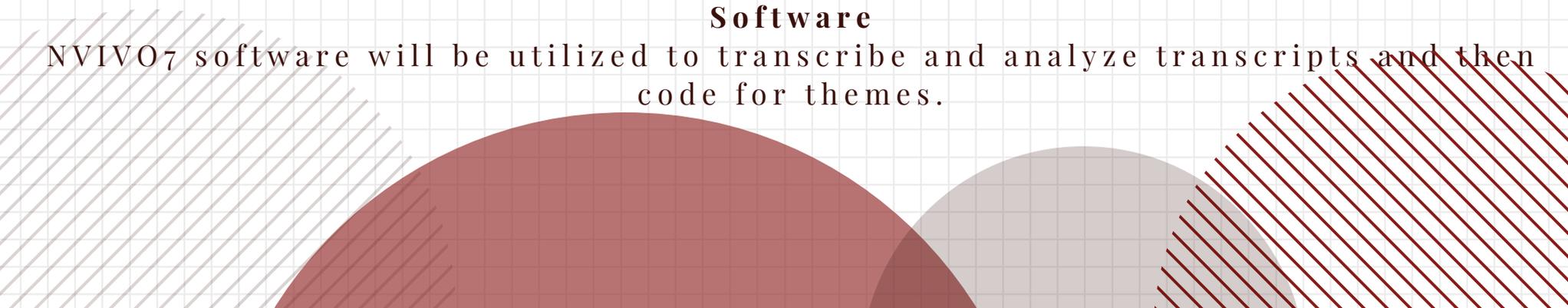
## **Peer Examination**

Researcher will work in teams to re-examine each other's analyses, verify data; question analysis of data; critique methodology, approaches, and processes (Creswell, 2014).

This step is critical in assessing each researcher's positionality.

## **Software**

NVIVO7 software will be utilized to transcribe and analyze transcripts and then code for themes.



# Limitations

Is our sample representative of the men of color at the university?

Positionality:

The researchers of this study both identify as female; this may hinder the men's level of comfort in opening up to females

This research will not take into account the experiences of women of color

The research will only focus on students at one specific university in Southern California; the experiences of men of color at community colleges, public universities, or other private institutions may differ

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