MODELS OF SUCCESS: AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES AND THEIR PATHWAYS TOWARD ENROLLMENT IN DOCTORAL PROGRAMS AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

African American males are often characterized by disparaging terms, such as: endangered, uneducable, dysfunctional, incorrigible, and dangerous (Strayhorn, 2013, Ferguson, 2000, Gibbs, 1988; Majors & Billson, 1992; Parham & McDavis, 1987). These characterizations have a negative impact on African American male academic achievement and inclusion in society (Strayhorn, 2013). Case in point, African American males during their K-12 schooling elicit national attention about their dismal academic performance in relation to their majority counterparts. For example, only 12 percent of black fourth-grade boys are proficient in reading, compared with 38 percent of white boys, and only 12 percent of black eighth-grade boys are proficient in math, compared with 44 percent of white boys (Gabriel, 2010). For African American males who do gain entrée into four-year institutions of higher learning – the results are discouraging: literature indicates high dropout rates (Tinto, 1993) and many report a lack of socialization into the campus community.

At the post-baccalaureate stage - the enrollment of African American males in doctoral programs has provoked serious debates within the academy. These discussions typically conclude with a unified goal to increase the participation of African American males in doctoral programs and encourage them to pursue tenured track positions. The study examines the enrollment trends of African American males at a Midwest Predominantly White Research Extensive Institution. The study demonstrates profiles of successful African American males thematically discussing the factors that resulted in their pathways toward enrolling in doctoral programs. The findings are important as they provide an additional layer of information graduate programs can use to increase enrollment of African American males.
As I complete my educational journey and earn the doctorate – there is one person who always believed in me. Regardless of what people (peers, teachers, etc.) said about me or thought about me – she always remained supportive and was proud of every experience I had. One of the greatest memories I will have is when you were so excited to see that I graduated from college and was going to graduate school. I can still hear you bragging to your colleagues “My son is going to be a doctor.” While you are not physically here to share this experience with me – I know I would not have made it this far without every choice and sacrifice you made in life. The tears, the excitement, and the celebration – everything you would have wanted to hear and witness. I dedicate this manuscript to you mommy. I love you always…

-Jamil D. Johnson
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access to so many opportunities as both an undergraduate and graduate student that have laid the foundation for me to work with the next generation of talented underrepresented students. Thank you so much Ave!

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time of day. Not only are you my fraternity brothers – but you have also served as influential role models in my life and for that – I am greatly appreciative.

To my mommy, my brother and sisters, nieces, nephews and extended family – I love you always. There are countless more people to thank that are not named above but to all of you – thank you for always supporting me throughout my journey. Thank you all.
Author’s Pathway toward the Doctorate

On a sweltering Independence Day in 1982 – I was born into this world. I remember as a child my mom telling me that the day I was born was one of the happiest days of her life. What is interesting about my birth is that only a few weeks earlier – my mom had just earned her Bachelor’s degree in Special Education from a research institution in the city of Chicago. I remember my mom telling me that she was determined to walk across that stage at 8.5 months pregnant with me. That day, my mom was making history in my family as well – she was the first person in my immediate family to graduate from college. In reflection, my mom really experienced many “firsts” for my family. I recall that she was also the first person to graduate from high school in the early 1960s. I remember the stories my mom would tell me about the days President Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated; and even more so, the racial tensions of growing up African American in various parts of the Midwest and South.

While my Grandmother did not have extended formal schooling – she rooted the importance of education in all of us. Given these early memories of both my mom and grandmother; metaphorically, one could say I was destined to earn advanced degrees from the day I was born.

In essence, this is where my story towards the doctorate begins.

My earliest memories of the importance of going to college was at the age of 3. Both my Brother and Sister were freshman and sophomore undergraduates at two different Universities in the State of Illinois. Because my siblings were already in college – I was in essence raised as if I was an only child. This is even more instrumental for several reasons. Most significant, my mother was teaching special education at school on the North Side of Chicago. Throughout my childhood – my mom took me to her school and I observed her teaching and making an impact
on her students. Additionally, my mom’s income placed our household in the middle-class income bracket which provided me access and opportunity that my siblings were not afforded.

The neighborhood that I grew up in on the south side of Chicago had a median income that was substantially higher than other neighborhoods. Right next door both my neighbors were educators; down the street lived one of Chicago’s top political aids. I was exposed to social and cultural capital early on as was many of my friends on my block. I attended a private school for pre-kindergarten – 5th grade. Through 4th grade – I loved my school and had a lot of friends. Suddenly, in 5th grade everything changed. My math teacher I always thought had it out for me – she would deliberately make me go the board and do math problems in front of everyone knowing that I struggled in math. There was no recess or lunch for me if I did not finish my math problems. That was humiliating. My 5th grade year turned out so bad that my mom ended up transferring me out to a public school.

This was the beginning of my new life and really placed me on a pathway for where I am today. It is like a chain – everything in the next several years of my life was influenced by the previous. At my new school – it was a small innovative school with less than 100 students. I remained here through 8th grade graduation. I received one on one teaching and assistance and became one of the star students earning honor roll status every academic semester. Once I was applying for high school – my mom made it known she did not want to attend the neighborhood school. In Chicago – students are required to attend their neighborhood school if they do not get into a school of choice or selective enrollment. My mom had heard about a new high school that was opening up.

This new high school was innovative and I would be part of the first graduating class. My first year – there were only us (freshman); my sophomore year (it was only the new freshman
and my class); and so forth until all grade levels were there. The school never maxed out over 450 students to maintain its small one-on-one focus. High School for me was amazing. Academically, I excelled in every subject maintaining a 3.5 GPA or higher every semester. I was actively involved as well – I was part of yearbook committee and a local newspaper. I had also the opportunity to participate in an internship program each year – I held jobs at several different locations throughout the Chicago area. One of my biggest inspirations in high school was actually from a teacher that most did not get along with. My history teacher was strict and easily was one of the more challenging classes overall. Yet, I managed to get “As” from him in both the required classes and AP Geography. Mr. Thomas inspired me to pursue History as a major in college and while we did not have an extended mentoring relationship – I owe a lot to him. Mr. and Mrs. Daniels who served as the lead teachers and founders of my high school – helped me so much throughout my high school journey. At graduation – I got the “gold robe” for National Honors Society participation; scholarship money; and I graduated in the top four of my class.

All of this sounds wonderful; expect I had one major barrier: my ACT score. My ACT score was not competitive by selected college admission standards. My dreams of going to college seemed all but to be taken out of hands. My guidance counselor in fact – encouraged me not to apply to my undergraduate institution because it would be a waste of my time and money; instead I should apply to a low community college for two years and work at McDonalds. This was troubling given my heavy involvement in high school and high GPA. I applied to the University of Illinois anyway and low and behold – got accepted! Under one condition.

That condition was that I had to complete a summer bridge component and after successful completion; I would then be fully accepted in the university. I did not know what a summer bridge program was but mom encouraged me to do it so that I could go to U of I. At
orientation – I was sold. Ronald Woolfolk and Pam Greer who directed the program were both tough – but at that time I needed that. I remember Ron putting me in my place when I got overly arrogant one time. I learned the value of attending such as prestigious institution. Summer Bridge was hard – 6 weeks long from 8am until 9pm daily covering every subject imaginable. Bridge showed me that I had a few academic deficits that needed to be strengthen so that I would be successful during undergraduate. As I recall Summer Bridge, I am reminded of other intervention programs that I had the opportunity to participate in throughout my K-12 schooling. Most of these programs included additional tutoring after school as well as a social component. These type of intervention programs are vital to the success of students (like me) that may not have had the opportunity to attend a highly selective college.

After successfully gaining admission into U of I – I was then part of the year long program in my college for two years. This gave me one-on-one advising with a graduate student who kept up with my every waking move (which was a blessing – it kept me in check). During one our conversations, my graduate advisor suggested I apply to this program called SROP. I was like SROP – what is that? He replied “research.” I remember initially thinking – summer school over the summer doing research – NO! Boy was wrong. This was my sophomore year and I attended a SROP information session – and that is where my next pathway toward doctoral study begins.

Ave Alvarado who directs SROP and serves as the Director of the Educational Equity Programs (EEP) office in the graduate college gave an amazing presentation about the benefits of participating in SROP. Including earning a stipend which at that time was much needed. I have the honor of participating in SROP for two consecutive summers and developed my research skills as well as gained mentorship with several faculty in my department. SROP taught me that
graduate school is a real possibility and that I could gain fellowships and assistantships; travel to conferences; and get published. The ultimate goal was to be faculty. My mentors during that time: Dr. Anderson, Dr. Span, and Dr. Trent and within the last few years – Dr. Baber - took me under their wing (and remain to this day). Along with Ave – I am forever indebted to their support on every level.

My undergraduate experience was very positive and I was socially integrated into the landscape through organizations and having those established relationships with faculty and administrators. As a result of my participation in SROP – my pathway toward doctoral study was a no brainer. I applied to the Educational Policy Studies (EPS) program and was accepted. This pathway would not have been possible if it weren’t for SROP, Ave, Dr. Anderson, Dr. Span, or Dr. Trent. I then participated in another pathway program on campus through the same office as SROP – called the Summer Pre-Doctoral Institute (SPI) that helped me adjust to being a graduate student and navigate the landscape.

Now, as I complete my graduate career – I reflect back on my journey. It all started with my mom – she gave me with the social and cultural capital that placed me on a pathway towards academic excellence. This was later added on by the networks I created and mentors I received throughout undergraduate and graduate school. As I plan for my next steps – my passion remains in the recruitment, access, and participation of underrepresented minorities in graduate school.

- Jamil D. Johnson
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

African American males are often characterized by disparaging terms, such as: endangered, uneducable, dysfunctional, incorrigible, and dangerous (Strayhorn, 2013, Ferguson, 2000, Gibbs, 1988; Majors & Billson, 1992; Parham & McDavis, 1987). These characterizations have a negative impact on African American male academic achievement and inclusion in society (Strayhorn, 2013). Further, media and academic research tends to group African American males into one category: failure. In 2008 – the United States witnessed an unprecedented event: An African American male became President. Leading up to the election, the African American community (as well as other traditionally underrepresented populations) demonstrated massive support for then - Senator Obama. What was most amazing was the number of African American males of all age groups whom came together and supported Senator Obama’s vision of Change. During President Obama’s second term as President (2012-2016) – he unveiled a new mission: My Brother’s Keeper which is a national initiative to empower boys and males of color. Similar initiatives exist both on the state and national level which propose to encourage males – especially African American males to graduate from high school and to access higher education at any collegiate level.

African American males during their K-12 schooling elicit national attention about their dismal academic performance in relation to their majority counterparts. For example, only 12 percent of black fourth-grade boys are proficient in reading, compared with 38 percent of white boys, and only 12 percent of black eighth-grade boys are proficient in math, compared with 44 percent of white boys (Gabriel, 2010). For African American males who do gain entrée into four-year institutions of higher learning – the results are challenging: literature indicates high dropout
rates (Tinto, 1993); many are unable to obtain adequate financial aid packages; and some report a lack of socialization in the campus community – just to name a few. However, there are African American males that complete K-12 schooling; persist to a four-year institution and successfully matriculate to pursuing the highest degree: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

According to Trent et al. (2003), the educational pipeline is one of the most enduring metaphors in all of education. The idea of the educational pipeline is to illustrate the passage of students from school entry to school exit in a flow without hindrance. Bonner II (2014) assert that the educational pipeline is used a conduit to illustrate the flow through P-20 education systems. According to Cuyjet (2009), “Research shows that the academic achievement “leakage” of bright, “capable African American males begins around the third grade and continues throughout the educational pipeline and the effects are seen at the doctoral and advanced professional educational levels (p. 1). This study examines successful African American males by looking at their academic pathways and the factors of their choosing to enroll in PhD programs at a research extensive predominantly white institution.

Background of the Problem

Within higher education there is a bias that tends to favor already privileged upper-class white males (Zamudio et al., 2011). Zamudio et al. (2011) contends that admissions decisions are further biased given the dependence on standardized exams. The higher a student’s SAT/ACT score, the greater likelihood they will attend a top college or university which will result in obtaining a better job with higher pay, accumulate wealth, and significantly secure and improve one’s life chances. Zamudio et al. (2011) suggest that the entire schooling process, from the first day of kindergarten to university graduation serves to reproduce existing historical and racial inequalities. Receiving a quality education becomes an essential factor for expanding
opportunities and life chances. However, for minority students who often lack the wealth to finance a future of opportunities, higher education represents a significant stepping stone (Zamudio et al., 2011).

African American male enrollment in post-secondary programs across the country has seen a national increase (Schott Report, 2012). However, their enrollment in doctoral programs remain dismal (Roach, 2003). The National Advisory Committee on Black Higher Education and Black Colleges and Universities note that “statistics on Black graduate enrollment and post-baccalaureate degrees awarded to Black students indicate that Black access to graduate and professional study remains a persistent inequality in the American educational system. Despite recent progress in Black enrollment in the undergraduate ranks at predominantly white institutions, the National Advisory Council has warned that the situation in graduate and professional studies appears to be “A Losing Battle” (Satz, 1987). Research examining Black males in Higher education shows that African American males experience high dropout rates (due to lack of financial aid; lack of campus socialization, unable to perform academically) at the undergraduate level. Further, African American males face problems at the elementary and secondary level which prevent many of them from even pursuing an undergraduate degree. These early educational experiences become even more problematic when African American males attempt to gain admission into doctoral programs. African American males experience barriers of institutional racism that impede access and matriculation throughout their education (Roach, 2003). This study examines the gap in literature that looks at the pathways of successful African American males and their choice to enroll in doctoral programs.

Statement of the Problem
There is a wealth of research regarding the participation (or lack thereof) and matriculation of African American males at the undergraduate level. There is growing (but limited) research focusing on the persistence of African American males to doctoral programs (Tatum, 2003). According to Etson (2003) and Malveaux (2002), African American males are not enrolling in graduate degree programs at the rate of their majority counterparts and the rate is steadily declining nationwide. Crockett (2007) notes that low enrollments of African American males in graduate programs are due to poor academic preparedness, knowledge of financial aid, as well as racism experienced as an undergraduate. African American males made up 22.3 percent of graduate enrollment in 1999 compared to 17.7 percent in 2003 (NCES, 2005). In 2004, of the 1.4 million bachelor’s degrees conferred upon students; only 9 percent were awarded to African Americans. What is even more alarming is that only 3 percent of these degrees were awarded to African American males (Strayhorn, 2013). This is partly due to the gap in number of African American who enter college and those who drop out before completing their degree; thus African American male attrition is a significant program at the post-secondary level (Strayhorn, 2013).

Austin (2002) and Gardner (2007 and 2009) explain “While there is a growing body of scholarship related to the socialization of graduate students, there remains relatively little inquiry into the process of gaining access to graduate programs. The research that does exist on the topic of graduate school access suggests that the undergraduate experience, and particularly the type of institution that was attended, is crucial in the pipeline to graduate school (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2014, p. 168). Allen et al. (1991) extends, “Issues of access to graduate and professional school are important because African Americans continue to be underrepresented in advanced degree programs, especially the hard sciences and technical fields (Blackwell, 1981; Thomas, 1985).
Issues of success in graduate school and professional school – academic performance, retention, and graduation – are equally important, yet, they have received little attention from researchers and policy makers” (Blackwell 1981) (p. 161).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the pathways of African American males choosing to enroll in doctoral programs following the qualitative research methodology. The study will evaluate critical points within the educational pipeline for African American males that scholar’s term “leakage points.” These leakage points typically denote a time where African American males exit from their educational journey (i.e. 4th grade, high school, undergraduate). The African American male participants will give voice to “silenced” people (Creswell, 2005).

Significance of the Study

Few studies examine the pathways of African American males choosing to enroll in doctoral programs. There is a growing field of research on the participation and experiences of African Americans (as well as other traditionally underrepresented groups) in graduate programs; however, many of these studies exclude the stories of African American males (Baneji et al., 2006). The results of this study will provide meaningful discussions about access, opportunity, and various pathways that result in increasing African American males pursuing and earning the PhD.

Conceptual Framework

Tinto’s Student Integration Model (1975, 1987, 1993)
Vincent Tinto (1975) introduced the importance of student integration (both socially and academically) in the prediction of student retention (1973, 1993). The framework is based on the work of Emile Durkheim’s theory of suicide (1951) that pointed to one’s unsuccessful integration into society as a strong precursor to suicide. By analogy, Tinto’s integration model suggests that retention is related to the student’s ability and actions to become an involved actor in his or her instruction (Tinto, 1987). The integration model suggests the need for a match between the institution’s environment and student’s commitment. A good match results in higher student integration into the academic and social domains of college life and thus greater probability of persistence. When a match between student and institution is not good – students are more likely to drop out or transfer to another institution. Further, Tinto suggests that students enter college with pre-college experiences and background traits that influence their educational expectations and commitments. These commitments change during the college years as a result of their integration or “fit” into the academic and social life of the institution. Thus, the more the student integrates the higher likelihood the student will persist (Strayhorn, 2013).

Tinto’s (1975, 1987, and 1994) theory, though challenged, offers an explanation that may lend insight into why African American males choose to remain in college or leave. Tinto posits that student’s perceptions of the college experience become predictors of attribution. As such, African American males who perceive an inconsistency between themselves and the institution will experience more difficulty becoming integrated and therefore are less likely to stay in college. Tinto (1994) proposed that some form of both academic and social integration were necessary to positively impact collegiate perceptions because the two, though different, are interrelated (Brown II et al., 2012).
According to Strayhorn (2013) – the vast variety of literature and research on African American males in college provides evidence that Black men are more likely to experience the most academic and social challenges in college as compared to any other group (Flowers, 2003; Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, 1998; Jackson, 2003; Jackson & Crawley; Steele, 1997). As a result, given their low enrollment numbers, the low proportion of Black men on campus can impact the social climate and social integration of such students into the fabric of college life (Strayhorn, 2013). “Engagement” is a more common term for social integration and will be used interchangeably. Kuk (2010) defines “engagement,” as: “student has ongoing interaction with others students inside and outside of the classroom; which increases productivity and personal development” (p. 12).

**Social Capital**

Social capital, refers to the information-sharing networks or instrumental, supportive relationships that an individual may have that provide access to information and opportunity (Ceja, 2006). In addition, social capital refers to the social norms, values, and behaviors that affect an individual (Coleman, 1988). Such relationships may lead to advantageous behaviors, opportunities, or outcomes within a social stratum (e.g. clubs or groups where membership is open to “rich” only) (Strayhorn, 2013). Studies have found that children whose parents are both physically present and attentive tend to achieve better test scores, are more likely to complete high school and are more likely to attend to college (Valenzuela and Dornbusch, 1995; Furstenberg and Hughes, 1995; Parcel and Geschwender, 1995; Y. Sun, 1999; Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003) (Halpern, 2005). Furthermore, a wealth of social capital enables individuals to gain leverage in the pursuit of economic and cultural capital and encourages engagement in the democratic public sphere (Tierney, 2006, p. 22).
Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is the system of beliefs, tastes, and preferences derived from one’s parents and guardians, which typically define an individual’s class standing (Bourdieu, 1977a; McDonough, 1997). Bourdieu (1979a/1984) models that cultural capital is acquired through social origin (family) and education (schooling) (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). Understanding cultural capital is important in educational research as a number of scholars have shown that upper-class students inherit, acquire, and develop substantially different forms of cultural capital than working-class youth (Bensimon, 2007; Lareau, 2003; Oakes, Rogers, Lipton, & Morrell, 2002). This poses a problem because schools generally reward, acknowledge, and privilege the cultural capital of the dominant classes and systematically devalue that of non-dominant groups (MacLeod, 1995; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Villalpando & Solorzano, 2005). Further, cumulative acquisition of cultural capital is implicit: one who acquires high-status cultural capital through family origin and through education will be offered more privileges in society (Winkle-Wagner, 2010).

Application of Conceptual Framework

Tinto’s student integration model is vital in understanding what factors are important to student success at the undergraduate level. In this study it is hypothesized that African American male doctoral students were fully integrated into their undergraduate institution and thus took advantage of every opportunity available to them (including understanding the importance of enrolling and earning a PhD. Furthermore, both Social Capital and Cultural Capital inform Tinto’s model as students membership in organizations and networks encourage success; while
in many cases a student’s decision to be successful in undergraduate and further to pursue a PhD correlate to family attributes.

**Design and Method**

Using qualitative methods – the study follows a narrative research design which includes the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews that allow for free flow conversation. When people reflect upon their personal story, they select details of their experiences from their stream of consciousness (Siedman, 1991). Vygostky (1987) notes that every word that people use in their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness. People’s consciousness gives access to the most complicated social and educational issues as these are abstractions based on the concrete experiences of people (Siedman, 1991). Waller (1932) relied on in-depth interviews, life histories, participant observations, case studies, diaries, letters, and other personal documents to describe the social world of teachers and their students (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003).

Qualitative methods are used in the study to examine the educational pathways of African American males to graduate study. Qualitative methods include collecting descriptive data, employing inductive thinking, and understanding the participant’s viewpoint (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Further, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) note that qualitative methods focus on understanding and describing the lived experiences of participants. Some elements of the phenomenological approach are applied in the study.

The Phenomenological approach emphasizes the individual’s subjective experience (Tesch, 1990). Phenomenology seeks to understand the perception and meaning of a phenomenon or experience. The intent is to understand and describe an event from the point of view of the participant. According to Mertens (1998) – the feature that distinguishes
Phenomenological research from other qualitative research approaches is that the subjective experience is at the center of the inquiry. Requirements of the phenomenological approach include in-depth interviewing, face to face communication at least three times for each participant. Mishler (1986) cautions that researchers who propose to explore their topic by arranging a one-shot meeting with an interviewee whom they have never met tread on contextual ice. Further, it consists of “what” they experienced and “how” they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). The participants in the research are carefully chosen and all experience the phenomena being questioned, so the researcher can forge a common understanding (Creswell, 2007).

The study identifies ten African American males who are currently enrolled in doctoral degree programs at a research extensive institution in the Midwest. Programs include: Business, Community Health, Education, Mathematics Education, Engineering, History, and Psychology. Participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and took part in a series of in-depth interviews which follow the phenomenological approach. First, participants met with the researcher for a conversation (which averaged about 45 minutes) – this helps both the researcher and participant establish a comfortable relationship (rapport). During this time, the researcher explained the confidentiality agreement form and participants sign the consent form. At the end of the conversation, each participant received a manila envelope containing a Demographic Survey which each participant had two full weeks to complete. At the end of the two week period – the researcher contacted the participant to pick up the document in the provided tape sealed manila envelope. Within one week – the researcher contacted the participant to schedule an in-depth semi-structured conversational interview (averaged 90 minutes) based on the information from the demographic survey. Follow up interviews were arranged with participants to address additional questions or information that was clear during interview transcription.
Research Questions

This study seeks to increase understanding of post-secondary and post-baccalaureate experiences of African American males and the pathways that result in their decision to enroll in PhD programs. Specifically, this study examines the following questions:

1. What factors do African American male doctoral students identify as barriers to success throughout the educational pipeline (Secondary, Post-Secondary, and Graduate Study)?
2. What factors do African American male doctoral students identify as positive motivators throughout the educational pipeline (Secondary, Post-Secondary, and Graduate Study)?
3. What are the institutional and social factors that encourage African American men to pursue Doctoral study?
4. What was the epiphany moment African American males realized they wanted to enroll in a doctoral program? When did participant first learn about graduate study? Are there social capital factors that encouraged choosing to enroll in a doctoral program?

Limitations of Study

1. Study limited to one research extensive institution in the Midwest.
2. Initial challenge identifying STEM African American male doctoral students to participate in study.

Definitions and Related Concepts

Attrition: Students that do not successfully move through the educational system due to academic or behavioral problems.
Educational Pipeline: Trent et al. (2003), the educational pipeline is one of the most enduring metaphors in all of education. The idea of the educational pipeline is to illustrate the passage of students from school entry to school exit in a flow without hindrance.

Retention: The ability to keep students within the educational pipeline so that they successfully matriculate from one level to the next.

STEM: The term is used throughout the study which is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

Traditionally Underrepresented: Through the study, the term traditionally underrepresented will be used to discuss African Americans, Latino/a, American Indian/Native American, and underserved Asian populations (i.e. Lao, Vietnamese, Hmong).

Outline of Study:

The further chapters of the study include: The Literature Review (Chapter 2) which outlines scholarship related to the themes: Access & Participation in Higher Education programs for underrepresented students; K – 20 Pathways for underrepresented students. The Methodology section (Chapter 3) discusses the Qualitative Research design approach and its application to the research study. The Participants (Chapter 4) section highlights the ten participants and gives more detailed information about their backgrounds and journey to the PhD. The Discussion of Findings (Chapter 5) section highlights the emerging themes from the participant interviews. And finally the Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions (Chapter 6) section revisits the research questions and conceptual framework; and wraps up with a discussion of recommendations and concluding thoughts.
Hurtado et al. (1997) notes that almost 90 percent of high school seniors indicate that they expect to attend some type of postsecondary institution in the future. The United States system of higher education is considered to have universal access relative to other countries. However, universal access does not mean access for all. Empirical research on college impact show that high-stakes tests (SAT & ACT) serve as a measure for selectivity. These exams easily eliminate students whom do not meet strict benchmarks for admissions. Colleges and Universities use the SAT & ACT to recruit and retain the best students (Gumport, 2007). The issue of the equity of access to higher education for traditionally underrepresented groups (also termed minority) remains a significant problem. Underrepresented groups are defined as: African American, Hispanic American, Native American or Asian American. In the state of Illinois, traditionally underrepresented is defined by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IHBE) as minority groups which are designated in Illinois post-baccalaureate enrollment at a percentage rate less than the percentage rate of the minority group’s representation in the total Illinois population (Diversifying Faculty in Illinois Fellowship, 2012). Gumport (2007) notes that inequality has been an underlying concern in the field of sociology of education since its founding in the 1930s and 1940s. Within the field, inequality seeks to understand and explain the differential rates of access, achievement, and attainment by race, class, and gender (Gumport, 2007). Sociologist Walter Allen conducted a study (1988, 1992) and found that more black students enroll at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) than Historically Black Colleges & Institutions (HBCU’s); these students are also more satisfied with the resources offered at PWIs. Yet, the study shows that students at HBCU’s have greater contact with faculty, a stronger sense of
support, and a more positive academic self-concept. Conversely, HBCU’s have attracted more low-income black students than PWIs for the last 30 years (p. 106).

Once students are enrolled at a college, a new set of problems emerge – persistence. *The Organization of Academic Work* (1973) by Peter Blau found that institutional size is an important factor when looking at student persistence in higher education. Empirical research has shown that college student’s enrolled at large institutions are less likely to interact with faculty, get involved with student government, participate in athletics or honors programs, or have opportunities to speak up during class (Gumport, 2007, p. 103). Furthermore, these students note that they are much less satisfied with their faculty interactions and classroom instruction than students attending smaller institution (Astin, 1979). Yet, students on larger campuses are more satisfied with social life, the quality of science programs, and the variety within the curriculum than students on smaller campuses (p. 103). The aforementioned is a snapshot of the prevalent issues in higher education; more will be discussed later.

*Cultural Capital*

Pierre Bourdieu (1977) defines cultural capital as the “general cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed from one generation to the next” (Green, 2007, p. 7). Case in point, children whom come from high income families inherit substantially different body of cultural knowledge in contrast to students from working-class families (especially when the latter are from racial and ethnic minority groups) (Massey et al., 2003). Massey suggests that the cultural knowledge of middle-class whites is validated and systematically rewarded; however, the cultural capital of lower-class minorities is not (Massey et al., 2003). Ballentine et al. (2009) notes that “children from higher social classes have more cultural capital (e.g., proper language; knowledge of art, music, theater, and literature; and
knowledge of ideas important to the world)” (p. 22). As a result of their cultural capital attainment, these students are able to “trade” their knowledge in for higher status in school and employment opportunities (Ballentine et al., 2009). Further, individuals whom can access the various sources of capital make up the dominant class and are able to use varying resources to maintain their position relative to others in society (Yorke et al., 2004). Parents are no less anxious than their children when it comes to college admission. They ask admissions officials what elementary schools would be best for access to higher education as well as how to best prepare their child for the SAT (Espenshade, 2009). Further, competition for access to highly selective and elite colleges and universities is palpable in suburbia, where advantaged college applicants and their parents have the capacity to stack the deck in their own favor by hiring every resource possible to get their child admitted (McDonough et al., 2005, p. 60).

Families whom have high cultural capital have access to opportunities that improve their child’s access to the nation’s most elite colleges and universities. For example, tutoring programs, extracurricular activities, professional development opportunities, and top notch college advising (Lareau et al., 2002). However, students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have access to these cultural capital opportunities that are almost a requirement for access to higher education. Useem (1992) discusses that well-educated parents aware of the difference in taking algebra versus basic math in junior high school, immediately intervened when they disagreed with their children’s placement. Yet, parents with lower levels of education were unaware of the implications of being tracked onto a low level math course and as Useem (1992) notes, trusted the school personnel decisions (Gandara, 2002). Lareau et al., 2002 suggests that it is imperative that schools offer students from disadvantaged backgrounds to gain cultural capital through participation in college preparation programs.
Social Capital

Social capital refers to the “tangible benefits and resources that accrue to people by virtue of their inclusion in a social structure” (Massey et al., 2003, p. 6). Social capital is gained through membership in networks and institutions and then convert it into other forms of capital (such as education) to improve or maintain their position within society (Massey et al., 2003). When children are in contact with people (through friendships or family) that can help them prepare for college – these relationships represent social capital. Grupton et al. (2009) further notes that access to tutoring or mentoring programs demonstrates other forms of social capital. However, students from low-income families do not have equal social capital and do not benefit from these relationships (Gupton et al, 2009). Not having access to a social capital relationship can have disastrous impact on students from minority and low-income groups.

Stratification

Hodges (1964) notes that stratification systems are complex social structures that maintain social order; they are a way of classifying people and their functions (Verdugo, 1986). All members of society have an equal opportunity to experience upward mobility (Ballentine et al., 2009). However, research on access in higher education shows that not everyone has equal access. Further, those in the lower and upper class positions are typically locked into class positions; those in the middle class have limited mobility (Ballentine et al., 2009). Conflict theorists argue that the under classes are channeled into poor secondary schools, community colleges, vocational schools, and lower level jobs (Ballentine et al., 2009). In regards to stratification of high-stakes testing, proponents argue that it screens out those “who can’t make it.” However, those against high stakes tests argue that they do not give an accurate
representation of what students have learned; and students with cultural capital can be coached to raise their scores while those from lower-incomes cannot (Ballentine et al., 2009).

Further, African Americans are overrepresented in the lower income classes and since upward mobility for them proceeds at a very slow pace in a racist society, the continued denial of equal access to the educational opportunity structure assures a prolonged state of occupational servility (Blackwell, 1987). Additionally, Middle-class African Americans are more likely to live in lower class neighborhoods which make it impossible for them to have upward mobility (Massey et al., 2003). Teranishi (2010) notes that race remains one of the most important historical and contemporary issues in American society as it has for the consequences of stratification in the United States. Education is a requirement for social mobility, with opportunities and outcomes in education being a major requirement for gaining and maintaining social status Teranishi (2010).

Stereotype Threat

Claude Steele (1997) was first to coin “stereotype threat” which explains the structural barriers and achievement gaps of capable African American students. Moore II (2006) notes that it has less to do with their academic ability than with the threat of negative stereotypes about their capacity to achieve. Massey et al. (2003) exclaims that African Americans are stereotyped as being intellectually inferior in U.S. society and black students are keenly aware of these negative assumptions of their abilities (p. 10). When African American students are placed in remedial programs – stereotype threat can become “exacerbated” and depress their academic performance (Jencks, 1998). This is even more of a concern on college campuses where African American and minority students are “widely perceived (rightly or wrongly) by white faculty and students to have befitted from a ‘bending’ of academic standards because of affirmative action
(p. 10). Fries-Briott et al. (2000) further exclaims that racial and ethnic minorities struggle to prove themselves in the classroom because of the continuous doubts of their academic potential (Quaye et al., 2009).

Institutional Racism

Jones (1997) defined institutional racism as “those established laws, customs, and practices which systematically reflect and produce racial inequalities in American society” (Levin, 2003, p. 102). This is evident in our education system where at the secondary level – minority students are disproportionately placed in non-college preparation courses (for example, remedial and vocational education) (Verdugo, 1986). Minority students are expected to accept deplorable facilities, disastrous learning environments, and to learn from uncertified or inexperienced/incompetent teachers (Taylor et al., 2009). When minority students are placed in lower level tracked courses – they become less desirable for college admission (Rothstein, 2004), this in turn reinforces race-based admissions about their academic ability for college (Taylor et al., 2009). Adams (1995) notes that Black and Hispanic students are frequently recruited for athletic teams but rarely recruited for debate teams or other scholastic activities (Taylor et al., 2009). When students apply for admission to selective colleges – scholastic involvement is very important to student’s overall application.

Discussion of the Educational Pipeline

According to Trent et al. (2003), the educational pipeline is one of the most enduring metaphors in all of education. The idea of the educational pipeline is to illustrate the passage of students from school entry to school exit in a flow without hindrance. Anderson et al. (2007) suggests that “the matriculation through the educational pipeline is contingent upon each of the
areas of the pipe to be obscured and working in proper-order, which would allow for free-flowing exchange from point to point” (p. 18). Howard (2007) suggests that should the educational pipeline be “healthy” all students should have access to Advance Placement (AP) because these high-stakes courses provide “entrée to college and university eligibility.” Yet, according to statistics from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2003b), African American students were less likely than White, Asian American, or Latino students to enroll in AP mathematics, science, or foreign language (Howard, 2007). However, a major issue with the educational pipeline metaphor is that students experience interruptions that may hinder their success through the educational pipeline. Michael Olivas (1986) suggests that a stream or a river may be more appropriate, “because there would be a greater possibility of addressing the occurrence of blockages in the river stream, which could slow or divert the flow and/or divert it” (Trent et al., 2003, p. 28). Trent et al. (2003) argues that this “alternate imagery would be fitting for many of students of color because their participation in higher education is often fought with barriers that obstruct their educational progress” (Trent et al., 2003, p. 29). Anderson et al. (2007) contend that the educational experiences of African American students (for example) have been severely obstructed by inadequate schooling, historical injustices, and racial inequalities.

There have been numerous studies that illustrate that African Americans have not had equal access to higher education (Young, 1992). Alexander Astin in his seminal work *Minorities in Higher Education* (1984) suggests that there are critical points (Cuyjet, 2006) or “leakage points” in the educational pipeline where a disproportionately large number of minority groups drop out of the educational pipeline (Young, 1992). Astin (1984) identifies the following five
“leakage points” for minority students within the educational pipeline (Cuyjey, 2006; Young, 1992):

1. Completion of high school: High proportions of African American, Latino/a, and Native American students never complete high school
2. Access to college: Large percentages of minority students face barriers when applying to selective four-year institutions
3. Completion of college: Many minority students drop out of college before graduation and never receive an undergraduate degree
4. Access to graduate or professional school: As a result of many minority students dropping out of college before completion – it significantly decreases the number of minorities eligible for advanced degrees
5. Completion of graduate or professional school

When minorities are lost throughout these critical stages of the educational pipeline – it hurts their financial gain and social mobility.

Upward Bound emerged out of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 in response to the President Johnson’s War on Poverty. Talent Search (1965) was initiated under the Higher Education Act of 1965; followed by Student Support Services (1968) a service for disadvantaged students. All three programs are federally funded and make up the term TRIO (Office of Postsecondary Education). As required by Congress, two-thirds of the students served by TRIO programs must come from families with incomes below $24,000. Furthermore, Upward Bound provides students with academic instruction on college campuses after school, on Saturdays, and during the summer. Over 700 Upward Bound programs are operating around the country (Swail et al., 2002). In 1986, the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program was added
to give undergraduate students the opportunity to conduct graduate level research with faculty members on college campuses with the goal of increasing access to graduate programs.

**Discussion of Access & Participation to Higher Education**

Prior to the 1960s, racial and ethnic minorities were largely excluded from higher education through a combination of overt (legal) and covert (social and political) mechanisms (Ternaishi, 2010). Ogbu et al. (1986) suggests that African American and Latino students whom aspire to high academic achievement are accused of “acting white” and thus being shunned by their low-performing (Gandara, 2002). African American and Latino students are significantly less likely to enter postsecondary education than white students. If they do, they have a higher likelihood to end up in two-year colleges rather than four year colleges (Karen et al., 2005). Ogbu (1978) suggests that because Blacks had limited opportunities in America, they developed an ‘oppositional,’ culture that equated academic success with “acting white” (Jencks et al., 1998).

The gaps in enrollment of African American, Hispanic, and Native American populations continue to be an issue in access to higher education (Swail et al., 2002). One of the reasons for lack of access to these groups may be that many programs that exist for minority and low-income students focus on the application of higher education but not on the factors of preparing and succeeding in college (Swail et al., 2002). In 2001, 65 percent of white, 16 to 24 year olds had enrolled in college compared to 55 percent of African Americans and just fewer than 50 percent of Hispanics of the same age (Bowen at al., 2005). Many Latino’s are eliminated from the college pool before high school graduation. Close to one-third drop out before completing high school (though, this number contains immigrants who were never enrolled in U.S. schools (Zusman, 1999). African American and Latino (and first-generation) college bound students are
significantly more likely than their white peers to be on non-college tracks and to have their college plans influenced positively and negatively by counselors (McDonough et al., 2005). Each of these groups needs more accurate information regarding courses, grades, and test scores required for admission to college (Jackson, 2012). Among minority students who attend four-year colleges, they are more likely to be placed in remedial courses that do not count for college degrees (Roderick et al., 2008).

According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac* (2005), of the 16,611,700 college students enrolled in 2002, 43.4 percent were men and 56.6 percent were women. American Indian, 39.6 percent men/ 60.4 percent women; Asian 46.9 percent men/ 53.1 percent women; Black, 35.8 percent men/ 64.2 percent women; White, 44.0 percent men/56.0 percent women (Cuyjet, 2006). There are approximately 4,200 accredited degree-granting institutions; a little over 1,800 two-year colleges (Bowen et al., 2005). In the past 40 years, higher education has become a requirement for middle-class success, as the value of a high school degree has dropped (Karen et al., 2005). The number of women attending college in the United States has doubled since the 1970s. Case in point, in 2004, the number of women in college outnumbered men by 9.88 million (Ballentine et al., 2009). University attendance results in academic and cultural capital as well as exchange value in terms of high status occupations, with middle class income and lifestyle – these are outcomes that as Oakes et al. (2002) suggest Americans fear are becoming unattainable without advanced degrees.

A debate in the research in access to higher education stems from the “one model fits all” method – meaning that a presented model will work on all students regardless of background, race or social class. Nora (2002) suggests that empirical research still focus on looking at databases but more observational work needs to be done to create models that will be benefit all
students with different variables. Further, Adelman (2002) notes that while hundreds of studies exist on low-income students, the majority of the studies shuffle the same variables back and forth with different data sets and methods. Essentially, researchers are not going outside the safe domains of research – they like their populations neatly packaged: urban means poor and minority; suburban means middle class and white; rural is a mystery and most analysts would prefer to leave it that way (Adelman, 2002). The challenges of higher education today bear a resemblance to the issues of access that were faced forty years ago: swelling enrollments, inadequate capacity on college campuses, and the recognition that financial barriers restrict access to higher education (Fitzgerald et al., 2002).

Matthews (2002) notes that while researchers and policymakers produce mountains of data under the No Child Left Behind Legislation (NCLB) of 2001 illustrating where K-12 public schools are meeting and not meeting their teaching obligations – higher education is largely ignored. Matthews argues that they tend to accept the general assumption that universities are superior academic institutions whether there is data is show or not. Under the Obama Administration, there is a push to evaluate institutions across the country. Obama wants to create a $1 billion version of the Race to the Top competitive-grant program to encourage states to maintain their spending on higher education and ensure that students graduate on time and get more for their buck (Klein, 2012). Further, Obama has proposed a “college scorecard” which would be provided to students and their parents with comparative information about how institutions relate in terms of graduation rates, student-loan repayment rates, and graduates’ future earning potential (Klein, 2012). Some of this information is already collected by institutions but not widely distributed amongst applications. This scorecard would be similar to the national report cards mandated under the NCLB legislation which are mandated to publish.
desegregated test score results by race; teacher quality information; and enrollment data (Johnson, 2006). Steve Schneider, a guidance counselor at Sheboygan South High School in Wisconsin supports that college scorecard because it is important to see the outcomes before the investment is made (Klein, 2012). Yet, Christine Keller (Director of Research and Policy at the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities – APLU) cautions that “federal mandates always made me nervous” (Klein, 2012).

Since the 1980s, tuition has more than doubled while inflation has risen much faster than the average family’s income (Draut, 2005). Minority students come from families that (on average) have lower incomes; they are most affected by rising tuition costs. Data from the 2000 Census (2005s) show that White families nationally had a median income of $54,698 in 1999; black, Native American, and Hispanic families had median incomes below $35,000 (Heller, 2005). The inequality of higher education is not limited to just race. It is also limited by socioeconomic status. According to Draut (2005), at the undergraduate levels – nearly three-quarters of students at the nation’s top 146 colleges come from families in the top quarter of socioeconomic status (SES) only 3 percent are from the lowest SES quartile. Parents who are familiar with and understand the importance of higher education are much more likely to convey and support the social and academic characteristics that result in college attendance. Unfortunately, low-income students are unlikely to have participated in campus visits, spoken with college representative or participated in college preparation activates (Hagedorn et al., 2002). Students from lower socioeconomic neighborhoods and family situations have not have taken the best courses that result in access to higher education or established “proper scholastic habits, resulting in grades and test scores that do not meet the admission standards of colleges and universities” (Yonezawa et al., 2002, p. 148). Low-income students are significantly less
likely than upper income students to attend college, even when their test scores are similar. Akerhielm (1998) shows that one out of every four high school graduates scoring at the top of their class, but coming from low-income families did not go to college (Gandara, 2002). Despite federal programs like (Upward Bound/TRIO), low-income students still face severe challenges in gaining access to higher education (Fitzgerald et al., 2002). Carneiro et al. (2005) note that “Children whose parents have higher incomes have access to better quality primary and secondary schools” In contrast, low-income families have greater difficulty in providing adequate resources in time before graduation to ensure access to higher education (Bowen et al., 2005, p. 77). Perez (2012) suggests that while the largest segment of the American population is estimated to be minority by 2025, these groups are still highly underrepresented in higher education; graduate at lower rates, and accrue higher student loan debt that other students.

*High-Stakes Testing: The SAT/ACT Debate*

Standardized exams created a ranking system of Americans, one by one from top bottom on a single measure. If one analyzed the ranking by social or ethnic group, “Negroes,” would always be at the bottom (Lemann, 1999). Case in point, the average SAT I verbal test score for African Americans in 2003 was 431 (out of 800), while the average score of Asians was 508. The average verbal score for Native Americans was 480 while the average score for Hispanics ranged from 448 to 457 (Bowen et al., 2005). In terms of gender - while the number of men in college and universities have been outnumbered by women, SAT and ACT data illustrate that males have performed better on these tests between 2005 and 2007. Also, African American males have obtained higher scores than African American females in the same years (Garibaldi, 2009). Ballentine et al. (2009) cautions that the Native American child on a reservation asked about the role of the violin in an orchestra would be at an extreme disadvantage on the SAT.
Yet, it is important to reflect--these exams are not going anywhere. Education today is under a high-stakes testing mandated policy under NCLB at the K-12 level (Johnson, 2006). More than four million people took either the SAT or the ACT in 2002 and the number is increasing yearly (Sedlack, 2004). Many colleges limit decisions to students whom are in the top 5 percent of their graduating class. If colleges based their admissions decisions entirely on test performance and only accepted students who scored in the 95th percentile, then less than 2 percent of their students would be black (Jencks, 1998).

The use of SAT scores to indicate preparation for higher education has come under lots of criticism over the years. Those against the exams charge that these high-stakes exams are culturally biased (Taylor, 1980) and that research has consistently shown that these tests are not a great measure of predicted academic college performance (Massey et al., 2003). Admissions commiters typically utilize the SAT score to draw inferences about the applicant’s future academic performance (Wightman, 2003. Schwartz et al. (1999) suggest that high school grades remain a better predictor of success in college for minority students than do standardized exams (Gaither, 2005). Traditional predictors of academic success such as the ACT and SAT scores do not provide an adequate basis for understanding the academic performance of African American students at PWIs (Nettles, 1986). Jencks et al. (1998) argues that many egalitarians argue that using the SAT to screen applicants for selective colleges is unfair to blacks because the tests undermine their academic potential. Yet, almost all colleges have found that when they compare black and white undergraduates who enter with the same SAT scores, blacks earn lower grades than whites, in their first and consequent years (Jencks, 1998). Conversely, Steele et al., (1998) note that the educational achievement and school retention rates of African American children have lagged behind those of whites for as long as records have been recorded. In higher
education, 38 percent of black entrants graduate with six years; compared with 58 percent of white entrants. African Americans who graduate typically earn a Grade Point Average (GPA) two-thirds of a letter grade below those of white graduates (Steele et al., 1998).

**Guidance Counselors as the “Gatekeepers” to Access to College Curricula**

Guidance counselors have a pivotal role in helping all students gain access to higher education. McDonough (1997) suggests that guidance counselors are the gatekeepers to college access and play a very important role in student’s access to higher education. However, counselors are not always available for students. A study conducted by Fitzsimmons (1991) found that the average counselor-to-student ratio at a low-income inner-city school was 1:740. Counselors will track students into the lower tracks if they deem the student is not college material. Students attending low socioeconomic status schools and students of color; likely do not receive resources at home and rely more heavily on counselors. However, counselors at these schools typically are dealing with more student problem issues such as dropout prevention and discipline (Teranishi, 2010). Case in point, Minority students do not see high school guidance counselors as allies or systems of support. Metaphorically, counselors have been called “gatekeepers,” because they typically refuse to enroll students of color in college preparation courses (Gandara, 2002). Reasons for counselors blocking minority students from these courses are a result of low test scores or not being prepared to take on the challenge of a rigorous course load (Oakes, et al., 1985). Gandara (1992) notes that once students are tracked into the lower reading or mathematics groups – it is difficult, if not impossible, for low-tracked students to ever compete with their peers whom have become proficient in material to which they have never been exposed (p. 89). Even more so, once students are placed into the lower tracks – it is almost impossible to be socially mobile to get to a higher track (Lucas, 1992). Tracking results in
disproportionate (and open inappropriate) placement of racial and ethnic minority students in the lowest ability courses. Teranishi (2010) suggests these results have a significantly negative effect on these students’ opportunity to learn. Students socioeconomic level, however, does affect assignments, with higher socioeconomic levels are typically placed on college tracks; in contrast those with lower incomes are not (Lucas, 1992). According to Smith (2001), some African American parents feel that counselors and college admissions officers are “hiding” or purposefully withholding information they need to help get their children into college.

High school counselors report that they are under constant pressure to “produce” by getting students into exclusive colleges. The pressure is felt most at the most elite private schools, where parents feel they are paying a premium for results (Fallows, 2005). Ballentine et al. (2009) notes that if students want to pursue college; it is important for them to enroll in the college preparation courses of mathematics and science. However, Howard (2007) argues that the exclusion from high-stakes classes all but assures the fact that African American students will be among the lowest groups represented at most colleges and universities. Oakes et al., (2002) note that Advance Placement classes and test driven curricula have become a required part of the upper college preparatory tracks, especially in high schools in affluent areas. Trent et al. (2003) exclaims that tracking practices have harmful effects on minority and poor students’ academic careers. When students have access to the college preparatory material, they have access to higher education. Jencks et al. (1998) found that when black students whom have access to college preparatory courses score about as well as their white counterparts on the SAT (p. 39).

The growth in access to AP courses for White and Asian students have outdistanced those for Latinos and African Americans. AP courses are generally limited to those meeting the strict
entrance requirements rather than being available to all students. Oakes at al. (2002) suggests that schools that serve poor and minority students typically offer few or no AP classes (especially in gate-keeping subjects like science and mathematics), whereas schools in high income areas can offer as many as 20 or more courses. When teachers and counselors advise students into general education or vocational programs, they fail to recognize that these groups of students have not been given a fair chance to develop the adequate academic skills needed for access to higher education (Ballestros, 1986). However, while students whom enroll in AP courses have an advantage to college access; William Casement questions the quality of the courses being taught. Casement suggests that colleges have lost their confidence in the ability of high school AP teachers to teach their subject matter as well as instructors whose introductory courses the AP students want to skip. Many high school teachers do not have the many academic credentials as the college instructors – he argues that the introductory courses at college are better (Matthews, 2002).

_Understanding the Financial Aid Debate_

During the presidencies of Reagan and H.W. Bush in the 1980s, access to federal grants was reduced and an emphasis on loans became “bedrock” of student financial aid (Green, 2004). By 1983, about 80 percent of all students received financial assistance from the government. However, during the first term of President Reagan; financial aid support significantly declined. Blackwell (1987) notes that there was a $2 billion drop in total aid between 1981-1982 and 1983-1984. Federal aid programs were created so students would have greater access to higher education programs; however, the dependence on loans can have negative effects on student success in college. The decrease in federal support for financial aid programs has diminished access opportunities for students of color; and even more so for students from low-income
families (Green, 2006). Case in point, financial aid is often the primary consideration in making the decision to continue or leave college. Jensen (1981) and Murdock (1987) found that financial aid promotes student persistence. Financial aid is more effective for low-income students’ persistence than students from other incomes (Fitzgerald et al., 2002). When making this important decision, students consider not only the amount awarded, but also the proportion of grant to loan aid. Debt created from taking out loans creates stress for student’s success and stratification in college (Jones, 2001). Yet, Swail et al. (2002) states that making financial aid available to students to attend college is not enough to ensure that all students have equal access to the benefits associated with earning a college degree. As the availability of Pell Grants and free aid decrease, the dependence on federal and private loans increases. Students are becoming more reliant on subsidized and unsubsidized loan programs (Swail et al., 2002). When students take out federal and private loans results in students incurring large amount of debt while still enrolled in school. When low-income students take out loans – they may not understand the seriousness of the money in which they are borrowing. Further, Bowen et al. (2005) suggests that low income students and their families may have previous bad experiences with other kinds of bad debt (like credit card debt).

Since the 1980s, tuition has more than doubled while inflation has increased much faster than the average family’s income (Draut, 2005). Minority students come from families that (on average) have lower incomes; they are most affected by rising tuition costs. Data from the 2000 Census (2005s) show that White families nationally had a median income of $54,698 in 1999; black, Native American, and Hispanic families had median incomes below $35,0000 (Heller, 2005). One study estimates that 90 percent of dependent students who receive financial grants are from families with incomes below $40,000 (Bowen et al., 2005). A literature review from the
early 1990s illustrate that students from low-income families and their parents often do not understand the application process or their own eligibility for aid. When students are unaware of what resources may be available, the potential applicant from a poor family may find the application itself a challenge (Bowen et al., 2005). Conversely, Flint (1992) sound that students and their families experience difficulties understanding the financial aid process. First-generation students lack the knowledge of college finances and budget management (Richardson et al., 1992).

In 2008, Standard University announced the largest increase in its history for financial aid program for undergraduates. Parents with incomes less than $100,000 will no longer pay for tuition. Parents with incomes with less than $60,000 will not be expected to pay tuition or contribute to the costs of room, board or other expenses. The program also eliminates the need for student loans. Stanford University President John Hennessy notes that the institution is committed to ensuring that Stanford asks parents and students to contribute only what they can afford for an education. “We understand how families face serious financial pressures, and we are going to assist them” (Trent, 2008).

The Illinois MAP Grant is the fourth largest need-based aid program in the country with a budget of about $398.5 million (plus $4 million from federal S/LEAP). In 2010, it provided approximately 140,000 students aid in fiscal year 2010 (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2010). However, in 2012, the funds for the Monetary Award Program (MAP grant) dried up following the end date of March 13 student aid applications (the earliest the state has run out of grant money) (NBC News, 2012). These trends in depleting financial aid are consistent as grassroots organizations and students continue to fight for more free money.
Merit Aid

Little research has examined the success of students whom receive merit aid (Heller, 2002). The development of the Helping Outstanding Students Educationally (HOPE) programs in 1993, Georgia became the first state to develop a broad-based merit grant program. Every student that met the programs requirements: student graduated from high school with a B average were awarded a full tuition scholarship at any public institution in the state, or $500 to attend a private institution in Georgia) would receive merit aid. Heller (2002) notes that merit aid programs have become the fastest growing category of financial aid in the United States.

GATES Millennium Scholars (GMS) Program

Trent et al. (2008) exclaims that the GATES Millennium Scholars (GMS) program seeks to increase the representation of low-income, high-ability minority students in colleges, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels (p. 83). Between 2000 and 2020, the program seeks to increase college access for underrepresented students. The program is administered through $1 billion in scholarships established by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

African American Men Access & Persistence in Higher Education

Education is seen as passive and feminine by young black males; this combined with low teacher expectations and many black men are doomed to fail (Horne, Jr., 2007). Horne, Jr. (2007) further discusses that institutional racism is an overarching factor that prohibits black males socially. Research shows that reasons black males do not go to college is because of the poor treatment they receive in high school from teachers; they do not want to be consistently thought of as stupid. Conversely, it is considered “cool” to be stupid. If African American male students earn honor roll status, their peers tease them and assign them the label of “sissy.”
avoid this, many African Americans will deliberately fail to do requirements assignments to retain their masculine status (Addison et al., 1999). African American men are typically the “class clowns” and enjoy the attention received for their behaviors which detract from their lack of scholastic readiness (Addison et al., 1999). Teachers must make it clear to African American males that they value them personally and collectively (Harris et al., 1999).

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 1.8 million black males between the ages of 18 to 24, of which 469,999 enrolled in a college or university. One hundred and twenty-four thousand have an associated degree or higher (Horne, Jr., 2007). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2005), fewer than one-third (32.4 percent) of black men who start college graduate within six years; whom also have the worst college completion rates among both sexes and all racial/ethnic groups (Harper, 2009). There is a perceived assumption that there are more black men in prison than college. Baldwon et al. (2006) review of the empirical data shows that in 2000, there were 791,600 Black men in prison compared to 602,032 black men on college campuses. The figure seems as if more men go to prison than college. However, Cuyjet (2006) cautions that this figure includes all age groups, which the majority of college students range in age from 18 to 24.

The experience of African American men in college shows that many of them feel isolated and encounter chilly environments. Davis (1999) argues that the isolation of Black men on campus is often a result of their unwillingness to interact with faculty or classmates outside of the classroom. These feelings are typically a result of negative in-class relationships. Freis-Britt et al. (2001) study shows that there was a 100 percent result of Black students at PWIs having to “prove” them in the classroom – especially to validate their intellectual competence (Bonner II et al., 2006). Campuses with low numbers of African American students and a lack of African
American faculty and staff make students feel even more isolated, which results in little or no involvement on campus (Brown, 2006). Thus, the recruitment, retention, and graduation of African American men in higher education is of great concern. However, Cuyjet (2006) suggests that the effects to increase college attendance and graduation by African Americans have benefited women in larger numbers than men. Cuyjet (1997) lists several indicators that impede African American men persistence in college (p. 74).

- In their residence hall rooms doing nothing
- Pursuing romantic endeavors with women
- Exercising in the campus fitness center
- Playing video games
- Playing basketball and other sports
- Trying to become rappers
- Showing off their material possessions (clothes, shoes, cars, and so on)
- Partying
- Hanging out informally with other African American men at designated spots on campus
- Studying alone in the library

Bonner II et al. (2006) suggests the creation of Black male support groups that function much like a freshman seminar – with the purpose of enlightening and exposing all Black men to the tribulations of PWIs. Programs should be specifically created for African American on college campuses designed to introduce them to campus organizations and to obtain leadership and membership positions. Establish a mentoring program for African American men where they work with African American faculty and staff where they will discuss social, academic and professional development (Brown, 2006). It is important that Black male faculty participate in
these types of programs to ensure the success of African American on college campuses. However, the access and retention of Black male faculty adds more discernment to the educational pipeline.

The Schott State Report on Black Males & Education is a national report that evaluates African American males in every state in terms of their educational attainment. For example, in Illinois – the report shows that during the 2007-2008 school year, the graduation rate for Black males at the high school level is 47 percent; while in contrast, the graduation rate for White men was 78 percent (Schott Report, 2012).

Historically, racism and discrimination have inflicted a variety of harsh injustices on African Americans in the United States, especially on males. Being male and black has meant being psychologically castrated – rendered important in the economic, political, and social arenas that whites have historically dominated (Majors & Billson, 1992). Within the African American community there is a term called cool pose where African American males have the ability to code switch. For example, being academic and scholarly in a collegiate or educational setting but then quickly turning to being cool and laid back in a social setting (Majors and Billson, 1992).

Social, economic, and environmental problems that plague the black community have also contributed to the problems black males have in school. High dropout rates, acceptance of failure, suspensions and expulsions – black males face discipline problems twice as often as black females (Majors & Billson, 1992). Fordham and Ogbu (1992) provide an in-depth analysis of African American men and their educational history: “First, white people provide them with inferior schooling and treat them differently in school; second, by imposing a job ceiling, white people fail to reward them adequately for their educational accomplishments in adult life; third,
black Americans develop coping mechanisms which, in turn, further limit their striving for academic success (Majors & Billson, 1992).

Black men have been regarded as a menace to innocence (particularly white women) and a potential danger to the social order. They are a threat that must be policed, controlled, and contained (Baker, 1998). At predominantly white schools and colleges, for example, Black males encounter stereotypes that are based on physical and social appearance. For example, the assumption that Black males are talented athletes, good dancers, and naturally “cool.” Ron Mincy (a six foot four professor of economics at Columbia University) points out, “having others assume you can play basketball is not a compliment when you are being considered for a job as professor or being reviewed for tenure (Noguera, 2008).

Kunjufu (1988) suggests that it is at the fourth grade level when many previously successful students begin to flag and fail (Allen-Meares, 1999). At the secondary level, Black males are vastly underrepresented in Advanced Placement and gifted programs – and overly represented in categories associated with failure (discipline, dropouts, grade retention) according to the Schott Foundation (2004) (Noguera, 2008). Black males tend to be placed in lower track and remedial courses and the roles they perform with schools suggest they are great basketball players or performers. However, writing for the school newspaper, participating in prestigious clubs and organizations is out of reach for them (Noguera, 2008). Black male students who are successful in school appear to understand what Delpit (1995) calls the culture of power and have the knowledge and skills to navigate and negotiate educational systems (Brown et al., 2013).
The inequality of higher education is not limited to just race. It is also limited by socioeconomic status. According to Draut (2005), at the undergraduate levels – nearly three-quarters of students at the nation’s top 146 colleges come from families in the top quarter of socioeconomic status (SES) only 3 percent are from the lowest SES quartile. Parents who are familiar with and understand the importance of higher education are much more likely to convey and support the social and academic characteristics that result in college attendance. Unfortunately, low-income students are unlikely to have participated in campus visits, spoken with college representative or participated in college preparation activities (Hagedorn et al., 2002). Students from lower socioeconomic neighborhoods and family situations have not have taken the best courses that result in access to higher education or established “proper scholastic habits, resulting in grades and test scores that do not meet the admission standards of colleges and universities” (Yonezawa et al., 2002, p. 148). Low-income students are significantly less likely than upper income students to attend college, even when their test scores are similar. Akerhielm (1998) shows that one out of every four high school graduates scoring at the top of their class, but coming from low-income families did not go to college (Gandara, 2002). Despite federal programs like (Upward Bound/TRIO), low-income students still face severe challenges in gaining access to higher education (Fitzgerald et al., 2002). Carneiro et al. (2005) note that “Children whose parents have higher incomes have access to better quality primary and secondary schools” In contrast, low-income families have greater difficulty in providing adequate resources in time before graduation to ensure access to higher education (Bowen et al., 2005, p. 77). Conversely, low-income students face three major inequalities in higher education: they attend college in fewer instances than others; complete college at lower rates; attend four-
year colleges generally, and selective schools, with substantively less frequency (Kahlenberg, 2004). Low-income, first generation students (parents did not attend college) face barriers to college access that affect their higher education experience. They experience the challenge of preparing for college academic and socially; lack the support networks such as family peers, mentors, and lack understanding of the college experience (Gupton et al., 2009).

King suggests that many low-income students work long hours (to avoid borrowing loans) and these results in them not focusing on their academics. For low-income students without sufficient grant aid, the financing choices are tough. Kahlenberg (2004) exclaims that working too much lengthens the time to graduate and may jeopardize getting a degree. Research has found that low-income students work more hours on average than other students who work (Corrigan, 2003). SAT scores of low-income students lag two hundred points behind high-income students on average; while a U.S. Department of Education survey found that only one-fifth of low-income students compared with three-fifths of high-income students, are “highly qualified” for college (Kahlenberg, 2004). There has been a more recent push for affirmative action policies include access for low-income students. Carnevale et al. (2004) found that universities provide no comparable help to low-income students to access higher education. Kahlenberg (2004) notes that “the underrepresentation of the poor and working class at elite universities is far greater than the underrepresentation of racial minorities. Findings by the Washington Post (2003) show that Black families with incomes in excess of $60,000 live in neighborhoods with higher poverty rates than white families earning less than $30,000. This imposes a disadvantage for minority students (Kahlenberg, 2004).

*Persistence & Retention among Minority groups in Higher Education*
Astin (1984) suggests that involvement is important for students to be successful in college. This claim is supported by Harper (2006) that notes that involvement is central to the success of African American men in college. Sutten and Terrell (1997) found that few African American men and even more so, African American men were actively involved in out of class activities at PWIs (p. 73). When African American males do not see other African American males in student organizations – therefore conclude that involvement is abnormal and socially inexpedient; men would rather assert proficiency through a more masculine array of activities, such as competitive sports (p. 75). Hurtado et al. (1999) discusses that the empirical literature shows countless narratives of the “chilly” classroom climate for women and students of color in higher education. This results in negative effects on student persistence and success in college (p. 41).

It is important that college campuses offer opportunities for minority students to join clubs and organizations that can provide academic enrichment as well as social rewards. Belonging to a group that fosters and promotes their cultural or ethnic diversity can be essentially in helping students to persist. Further, involvement in community based projects can bridge the gap between their old neighborhood and their college community (Astone et al., 1990). These relationships with the community allow students to return to their homes as “educated” persons who care (p. 69). When students of color are placed in environments where they are not welcomed (via organizational policies or the formal and informal interactions with other students, staff, and faculty), changes of these students feeling alienated can increase, consequently increasing student attrition rates (Jones, 2001, p. 14). Further, African American students often suffer feelings of alienation, frustration, and despair, all of which distract from the learning process (Brow, 2006).
Retention is defined by the ability of a particular college or university to successfully graduate students that initially enroll at the institution. Some campuses do a better job of retaining certain types of students. For example, HBCU’s have been more successful at retaining female and black students (Berger et al., 2005). Tinto (1975) suggests that academic success is a related to “student-institution fit. The more a student assimilates into the college’s social and academic systems, the more committed the student will be to the college (Bonner et al., 2006). Tinto (1975, 1993) and Spady’s theoretical model of the undergraduate dropout process (1970, 1971) suggests that students must undergo a form of suicide theory (1951), whereby they make a clean break from the communities and cultures in which they were raised to integrate and assimilate into the dominate culture of the colleges they attend (Tierney, 2008). William Spady’s article, “Dropouts from Higher Education: An Interdisciplinary Review and Synthesis” (1971) reviews empirical literature in the 1960s and concludes: If the student and environment are congruent in their norms, the student will assimilate both socially and academically, increasing persistence (Berger, 2005). Essentially, Tinto claim that when students “commit” suicide they will succeed; in contrast, those who do not, will fail (p. 104). This is consistent with Bourdeiu’s “habitus” theory, which claims that successful navigation through higher education requires prior familiarity with elite culture codes. Students whom are unfamiliar with these codes find it difficult to persist – this is even truer for students of color and low income students. Yorke et al. (2004) notes that this is consistent with Tinto’s model for social integration.

There has been a lot of rejection of Tinto’s model of retention. Scott (2012) notes that the model was designed for White men at PWIs, and is not applicable to minority students (Hurtado et al., 1997). Tinto’s theory encourages students to eliminate their cultural traditional and supportive relations to apply those of PWIs (p. 63). Tinto (1975) showed that dropping out
of college includes variables of academic unpreparedness, personal and financial difficulties, motivational and coping problems, and study skills and personal commitment and commitment to the institution (Cuyjet, 2006). It has been argued that students from low incomes will not succeed in college and thus drop out. Ramist (1981) and Mingle (1987) found that Black student retention problems were linked to low family socioeconomic status, which, resulted in students having other problems. However, as Webb (1992) cautions, this is not consistent with Tinto’s model of retention (p. 156). Nora (2002) notes that many researchers have relied on Tinto’s model as platforms to replicate and test persistence theory. While many have received mixed results, many of the models have been validated and demonstrate predictive value (p. 70). Jones (2001) suggests that successful retention models include mentoring, financial incentives, and other support services for students, but also leadership and faculty must become and remain involved.

The McNair program (federally funded under TRIO) was discussed earlier. The program is used as a recruiting tool to retain and mentor traditionally underrepresented students in undergraduate with the goal that they will pursue graduate study. McNair on the University of Illinois campus is housed within the Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA). There is also another program that seeks to increase access through educational pipeline for underserved populations to graduate study on the Illinois campus. The Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) is commissioned by the Curriculum on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) and is located on Big Ten institutions across the country. On the UIUC campus, SROP is housed in the Graduate College. In 2012, SROP celebrated its 25th anniversary of providing high quality faculty mentors to students where they conduct advanced undergraduate research during a 10 week summer experience.
Likewise, the Summer Pre-Doctoral Institute (SPI) is specific to the University of Illinois campus – though, there are similar programs with different opportunities offered across the country. SPI is an opportunity for newly admitted traditionally underrepresented graduate students (across STEM and humanities disciplines) to participate in summer research experience prior to starting school in the fall. The ultimate goal of SPI is to increase the number of minority PhDs with the goal that they will earn tenure track faculty positions. Conversely, the Diversifying Faculty in Illinois (DFI) Fellowship is a highly competitive fellowship for traditionally underrepresented students that pays for up to four years of graduate study through a tuition waiver and offers a monthly stipend. The goal behind DFI is to increase access of traditionally underrepresented faculty members in the state of Illinois.

**Successful Completion of the Educational Pipeline**

The *Digest of Education Statistics* (1999) note that of the 550,822 full time faculty members employed at colleges and universities, only 26,835 of these were African American (Branch, 2005). In comparison to the retention of African American undergraduates at PWIs; some of the challenges for retaining African American faculty include: “chilly” campus climates; disparity in the promotion of African American faculty as opposed to white faculty; decline in number of African American graduate students (p. 177). In 2001, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) showed that African Americans represented 10 percent (98,307) of the total enrollment of graduate students (CGS, 2004) (Johnson et al., 2007). The underrepresentation of faculty of color is often attributed to the doctoral production “pipeline problem” – essentially, there is not enough qualified doctoral graduates of color to fill vacant faculty positions (Villalpando et al., 2002). Conversely, Harper (2006) notes there are even a more pressing problem of concern for African American – getting African American men from college to
graduate and professional schools. African Americans are severely underrepresented in graduate schools across the country relative to their proportional representation among bachelor’s degrees (p. 177).

The author has illustrated the access points and the leakage points within the educational pipeline. For there to be successful completion of the pipe – one needs to successfully navigate through all the points of access (Astin, 1984) without encountering interference. Hopefully, educational policy at the K-12 and higher education levels will make this a reality for students of all backgrounds.

*Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU’s)*

Kimbrough et al. (2006) exclaims that fifty years ago, “over 90 percent of Black students (approximately 100,000 in 1950) were educated at traditionally underrepresented schools” (p. 7). However, HBCU’s today face challenges to attract, enroll, and retain significant numbers of African American (Kimbrough, 2006). There are 105 HBCU’s that are recognized by the government – 101 which are accredited (Howard University, 2012). Gasman et al. (2010) suggest that supporters of Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU’s) hail that they are some of the best institutions for African Americans because they create nurturing environments. African American students at HBCU’s tend to be more satisfied, more confident, and gain more in academic and professional development (Bridges et al., 2008, p. 220). However, Kimbrough et al. (1996) cautions that “One cannot assume that African American students at predominantly Black universities are necessarily better off” (p. 305).

Parents of African American students at HBCU’s have lower incomes than parents of Black students at PWIs (Brown et al., 2004). Also, graduates of HBCU’s are more likely to
continue their education and pursue graduate degrees than their counterparts at PWIs. While only 13 percent of African American college students attend HBCU’s, they produce the majority of our nation’s African American judges, lawyers, doctors, and teachers (Gasman, 2008, p. 22). Similarly, Gurin et al. (2006) show that HBCU undergraduate men were three times more likely to express intent to enroll in graduate and professional schools (especially doctoral programs). Further, men at HBCU’s were more likely to aspire to high prestige careers (such as engineering, business, and the sciences (p. 193). Gasman et al. (2012) explains that nearly 20 percent of bachelor degrees awarded to African Americans in STEM were conferred at HBCUs in 2009. Frierson (2011) suggests, “The pipeline to the professoriate in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields for African Americans has been a leaky faucet. It is common knowledge that is more African Americans are to enter the professoriate, they must first graduate from four-year institutions in those fields (p. 24).

**Graduate Education**

Low rates of participation in graduate education by African Americans, American Indians, Latino/a, and some Asian American groups are key and persistent problems for U.S. higher education. If minority students fail to go to graduate school and obtain PhDs, they cannot join the faculty. If they do not become faculty members, they will not be there to mentor new generations of minority students and to offer the type of diversity that should be present in a learning environment (Geortz & Kuh, 1992). The most common answer for the low participation of minority students in graduate education is the lack of adequate financial resources (Blackwell, 1987; Mooney, 1989; Trent & Copeland, 1987). Goertz & Kuh (1992) suggest that students could be admitted to graduate programs while still undergraduates. Students could take
specialized courses and participate in undergraduate research and seminars, developing many of
the skills desirable in graduate settings.

This chapter outlines some of the major themes that the research uncovers on African
American males both during their educational journey through the educational pipeline; as well
as the barriers and stereotypes faced in society. The next chapter introduces the Qualitative
Methodology which is what the study follows.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Methods

The term qualitative research was not used in the social sciences until the late 1960s. Creswell (1994) defines qualitative research “as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) further suggests that qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case studies; personal experiences; introspection; interview artifacts; cultural texts and production; observational, international and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives.

Qualitative research has an inherent openness and flexibility that allows the researcher to modify the design and focus during the study to understand new discoveries and relationships. Further, there is freedom unlike the quantitative method (hypothesis testing) which requires that the research plan not be significantly altered after data collection has begun (Maxwell, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) note that there are many challenges faced by the qualitative method. Politicians and “hard” scientists often call qualitative researchers journalists of soft sciences. The work of qualitative scholars is termed unscientific, or only exploratory or subjective.

Phenomenology Approach

This is a Qualitative study; however, elements of the Phenomenology Approach are applied. Researchers in the phenomenological approach attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations. Phenomenological sociology
has been particularly influenced by the philosophers Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz. It is also within the Weberian tradition, which emphasizes \textit{verstehen}, the interpretive understanding of human interaction. Phenomenologists do not assume they know what things mean to people that they are studying (Douglas, 1976). “Phenomenological inquiry begins with silence” (Psathas, 1973). This “silence” is an attempt to grasp what it is they are studying. What phenomenologists emphasize, then, is the subject’s aspects of people’s behavior. They attempt to gain entry into the conceptual world of their subjects (Geertz, 1973) in order to understand how and what meaning they construct around events in their daily lives. Phenomenologists believe that multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available to each of us through interacting with others, and that it is the meaning of experiences that constitutes reality (Greene, 1978). Reality, consequently, is “socially constructed” (Berger & Luckman, 1967) (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Understanding the lived experiences of participants marks the phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994) (Creswell, 1993, p. 13). The inquirer collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals (Creswell, 1993, p. 58). Participants spent seven months with the researcher and completed a series of interviews that included member checking to ensure accuracy of recalled information during data collection.

\textit{Research Questions}

1. What factors do African American male doctoral students identify as barriers to success throughout the educational pipeline (Secondary, Post-Secondary, and Graduate Study)?
2. What factors do African American male doctoral students identify as positive motivators throughout the educational pipeline (Secondary, Post-Secondary, and Graduate Study)?

3. What are the institutional and social factors that encourage African American men to pursue Doctoral study?

4. What was the epiphany moment African American males they wanted to enroll in a doctoral program? When did participants first learn about graduate study? Are there social capital factors that encouraged choosing to enroll in a doctoral program?

Research Site

The selected institution is a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) geographically located in the Midwest with distinction as a research extensive Institution by Carnegie classification. The institution is public and also the flagship school of the state. The name of the Institution hereafter is Carrington University. The university is a highly selective institution which enrolls 32,695 undergraduate students: 14,240 (or 43.6 percent) are women and 18,455 (or 56.4 percent) are men). There are 12,247 graduate students on campus. In terms of overall enrollment demographics: 0.1 percent are American Indian/Alaskan Native; 17.8 percent are Asian; 6.4 percent are Black/African American; 9.6 percent are Hispanic/Latino; 2.9 percent are Multi-race (not Hispanic/Latino); 0.2 percent are Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander; 62.1 percent are White; 0.8 percent are unknown.

Sampling

Miles and Huberman (1994) exclaim that “Qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people nested in their context and studied in-depth. Patton (1990) suggests that “purposeful sampling seeks information-rich cases which can be studied in-depth” and is the
dominant strategy in qualitative research. Information-rich cases are those in which a researcher has the opportunity to learn a large amount of information about the focus of the study (Patton, 1990). True randomness would be difficult in an in-depth interview study. Interview participants must consent to be interviewed, thus, there is an element of self-selection in an interview study. Siedman (1991) notes that self-selection and randomness are not compatible.

Qualitative researchers typically study a relatively small number of individuals and preserve the individuality of each of these analysis, rather than collecting data from large samples and aggregating the data across individuals. As a result, researchers are able to understand how events, actions, and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which these occur (Maxwell, 2004). This study is a focused sampling where participants have been recruited because they share similar traits or characteristics (African American males currently enrolled in PhD programs at Carrington University) (Creswell, 2005).

Snowball sampling is the process of selecting a sample using networks (Kumar, 2014, p. 245). Essentially, one participant identifies other people who are share in the phenomenon being studied. It can be thought of like a chain – one person recommends another person until the chain or until the number required has been met. “Information is collected from them, and then these people are asked to identify other members of the group, and in turn, those identified become the basis for further data collection. This process is continued until the required number or a saturation point has been reached, in terms of the information being sought (Kumar, 2014, p. 245). Creswell (2007) extends “The concept of purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research. This means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (p. 125).
Participants

The study identifies 10 African American men who are currently enrolled in doctoral degree programs at Carrington University. Programs include Education, Mathematics Education, Engineering, Business, and History. Often researchers want to select people whom they already have a relationship with: friends, those with whom they work, students they teach, or others with whom they have some tangential connection. However, Siedman (1991) cautions that the easier the access, the more complicated the interview. The researcher will build rapport with the participants which encourages getting along with each other, a harmony with, a conformity to, an affinity for one another (Siedman, 1991). For the same of establishment of rapport, for example, interviewers sometimes share their own experiences when they think it is relevant to the participants. Yet, this type of sharing may also affect and even distort what the participant might have said had the interviewer not shared his or her experiences (Siedman, 1991). Building rapport will open the doors for more informed research; however, it may cause problems if the researcher becomes a spokesperson for the group being studied, losing his or her distance and objectivity, or may “go native” and become a member of the group and forgo his or her academic role (Fontana & Fey, 2008). Further, it is very important that the interviewer establish trust with the participants (Cicourel, 1974). Fontana & Frey (2008) note that gaining trust is essential to the success of the interviews, and once it is gained, trust can still be very fragile. But any “faux pas” by the researcher may destroy all of the time and effort put into gaining trust and rapport with the participants. Dukes (1984) recommends studying 3 to 10 subjects, and in one phenomenology, Rieman (1986) studied 10 individuals (Creswell, 2007, p. 126). Furthermore, “To use phenomenological interviews effectively, it is essential that the interviewer has identified
participants who have both experienced, and are able to talk about the particular lived experience under examination (Roulston, 2007, p. 19).

**Instrumentation**

Participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and participated in a series of in-depth interviews which follow the phenomenological approach. First, participants met with the researcher for a conversation (these meetings ranged from 40 minutes to 90 minutes) – this helped both the researcher and participant establish a comfortable relationship (rapport). During this time, the researcher explained the confidentiality agreement form and received written consent. At the end of the conversation, the participant received a manila envelope containing a Demographic Survey which each participant had two full weeks to complete. At the end of the two week period – the researcher contacted the participant to pick up the document in the provided tape sealed manila envelope. Within one week – the researcher contacted the participant to schedule an in-depth semi-structured conversational interview (to last no more than 90 minute) based on the information from the demographic survey.

Wengraf (2002) encourages the use of a pre-interview questionnaire (demographic information or similar) so that participants can fill out as much information prior to the interviews as possible. Upon receiving the demographic surveys back; the researcher read through the documents and reflected upon the material. In some cases – additional open ended questions were developed that were specific to the participant (Wengraf, 2002).

**Interviews**

Interviews are used in qualitative studies to gather descriptive information in the participant’s own voice and to acquire and cultivate insights on how they interpret a certain event
or situation (Bogdan & Biklin, 2007). Narrative interviews center on the stories the subjects tell, on the plots and structures of their accounts. The stories may come up spontaneously during the interview or be elicited by the interviewer. In a narrative interview the interviewer can ask directly for stories, and perhaps together with the interviewee attempt to structure the different happenings recounted into coherent stories (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, P. 155). Through this research study – the participants will interact with the research in a conversational style meeting as well as through the completion of a demographic survey before participating in the informal 90 minute interview. Bogdan & Bilken (2003) suggest searching for common group “small talk” during the initial interviews to build rapport; or, if a subject is someone that knows the researcher well – you may get right down to business. The structure of the interviews for this study is a 90-minute in-depth open-ended conversation. The researcher will encourage the participants to talk about different areas of interest and allow for them to tell his story personally in his words (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Some may call this type of interview a guided conversation. Strong interviews are those in which the participants are free to discuss their points of view and the researcher is able to collect rich data filled with words that reveal the respondent’s perspectives. Further, transcripts are filled with words and examples (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Siedman (1991) suggests following a 90 minute interview format – an hour carries with it the consciousness of a standard unit of time that can have participants ‘watching the clock.’” Two hours seems too long to sit at one time. Anything shorter than 90 minutes for each interview seems too short and most participants appreciate a 90 minute interview so they know their time and voice is being taken seriously (Siedman, 1991).

Siedman (1991) notes that the purpose of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. The
use of interviewing to acquire information is so extensive today that it has been said that we live in an interview society Fontana & Frey (2008). Through open-ended questions the interview focuses on the topic of research. It is then up to the participant to bring forth the dimensions he finds important in the theme of inquiry. Further, the interviewer leads the subject towards certain themes, but not too specific opinions about these themes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

One of the aims of this research study is for the participants to have a positive experience where they will be able to reflect upon their participation gain “new insights into his life situation.” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The authors note that it is probably not a very common experience in everyday life that another person – for an hour or more – shows an interest in, is sensitive toward, and seeks to understand as well as possible one’s own experiences and views on a topic (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Semi-structured interviews are designed to have a number of interview questions prepared in advance but such prepared questions are designed to be open enough so that subsequent questions can be asked (Wengraf, 2002). The interviews will take place in a closed office space where the participants will feel comfortable to share their stories and know that their surroundings will be quiet and private from others (King and Horrocks, 2010).

The method of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of participants who have all experienced similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of relatively few participants (Siedman, 1991). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) note that in an interview conversation, “the researcher asks about, and listens to, what people themselves tell about their lived world. The interviewer listens to their dreams, fears, and hopes; hears their views and opinions in their own words; and learns about their school and work
situation; their family and social life. This study will encourage participants to reflect on their early educational experiences through present.

*Tape Recording*

The researcher voice recorded each 90 minute interview and transcribe them at a later date. Siedman (1991) notes that when tape recording interviews that the room set up must be free of background noise and that the microphone is close enough to the participant so that a clear voice is heard. It will take approximately 4 to 6 hours to transcribe a 90 minute interview according to Siedman (1991). Additionally, 10 minutes or more will be set aside after each interview to reflect on what has been learned from each interview (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The researcher also employed a member check to each participant in the form of summary notes from the interview so that they can check the accuracy of their life story (Mertens, 1989).

*Field Notes*

During the interviews, the researcher recorded field notes which will include research ideas, strategies, reflections, and hunches, as well as themes or patterns that emerge (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003). Bogden and Bilken (2003) cautions that tape recorders miss the sights, smells, impressions, and extra remarks said before and after the interview. Additionally, field notes can provide the researcher with personal log that helps keep track of the development of the project, visualize how the research plan has been affected by the data collected, and to remain aware of how he or she has been influenced by the data (Bogden & Bilken, 2003).

*Data Analysis*

The researcher anticipated three outcomes through data analysis:
1. Demonstrate the factors that supposed their enrollment in doctoral problems as well as the barriers faced.

2. Identify thematic constructs across participant’s educational journey that hinder and/or supports their pursuit of the doctorate (i.e. mentoring, undergraduate institution, financial aid (also debt), undergraduate research experience, etc.).

3. The most consistent themes across the participant’s stories (as well as those that are individualized) will be discussed in thorough detail to evaluate if these practices hinder or support enrollment in doctoral programs.

Creswell (2012) notes that themes (also called categories) are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database. Identify the five to seven themes by examining codes that the participants discuss the most frequently, are unique or surprising, have the most evidence to support them, or are those you might expect to find when studying the phenomenon. The reason for the small number of themes is that it is best to write a qualitative report providing detailed information about a few themes rather than general information about many themes (p. 245).

Within each theme – patterns will be identified as well. Hatch (2002) explains, “Patterns are regularities. They come in several forms, including similarity (things happen the same way), difference (they happen in predictably different ways), frequency (they happen often or seldom), sequence (they happen in a certain order), correspondence (they happen in relation to other activities or events), and causation (one appears to cause another) (p. 155).

Listening to the interview recordings prior to transcriptions allows an opportunity for analyses – the researcher will write notes and memos on what is seen and heard in the data, and develop tentative ideas about categories and relationships (Maxwell, 2005). Categorizing the codes also involves organizing the data into broader themes and issues (Maxwell, 2005).
Creswell (2005) states that the object of the coding process is to make sense out of text data, divide it into text or image segments, level the segments with codes, examine the codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapse the codes into broad themes. Themes (also called categories) are codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database (Creswell, 2005). There are several types of themes that can emerge from the research: 1) ordinary themes: themes that a researcher might expect to find; 2) unexpected themes: themes that are surprises and not expected to surface during the study; 3) hard to classify themes: themes that contain ideas that do not easily fit into one theme or overlap with several themes; 4) major and minor themes: themes that represent the major ideas, or minor, secondary ideas in a database (Creswell, 2005). Themes are integrating concepts. They can be defined as statements of meaning that run through all or most of the pertinent data (Hatch, 2002, p. 156).

Chapter 5 introduces the five major themes that the study uncovered as well as presents a series of patterns for each theme. The next chapter of the study introduces the participants that voluntarily agreed to participate in the study.
CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The participants in this study are currently registered as graduate students in various PhD programs at Carrington University. Carrington University is an internationally renowned research extensive institution known for pulling in big money for STEM related research. Many of the programs at Carrington (STEM and Social Sciences/Humanities) are highly ranked. The stories of these African American males demonstrate successful navigation through the educational pathways of K-12 > Undergraduate degree attainment > and entrée into doctoral programs (and in some cases within months of earning the PhD). Table I (presented at this end of this chapter) may be used for reference during this chapter and subsequent chapters.

This chapter will unfold the participants life narrative – information about their family structure growing up; statistical data on their neighborhood; enrollment and school data for their high school; and narrative pieces that each participant that highlights their trajectory to the doctorate.

Introducing Eddie

Eddie is an African American male from the city of Lake Wood. The neighborhood that Eddie grew up in has a population of 49,767 residents of which 95.2 percent are Black; 1.72 percent are Hispanic; 0.2 percent are Asian; and 1.77 percent are identified as other. The median household income of the neighborhood is $27,903. 22.1 percent of Lake Wood residents live below the poverty line. Eddie comes from a working class family; his mom graduated high school and his dad attended but did not graduate from high school. In recent years, this area has become the scene of gentrification due to its rich location in the city of Lake Wood.
“My elementary school was mixed and my parents didn’t want to send me to the neighborhood school – it was all black. It influenced my decision to enroll in Kirby High School. They are known for having very diverse students and rigorous programs at the time. Kirby High School which is one of the top high schools in his state has an enrollment of 2,120 students where 31.2 percent are White; 23.4 percent are Black; 26.1 percent are Hispanic; 15 percent are Asian; 0.3 percent are American Indian; 3.7 percent identify with two or more races; and 0.1 percent are Pacific Islander. 94 percent of students are ready for college (scored a 21 or higher on the ACT); 91 percent of students continue on to postsecondary institutions. Kirby offers a host of Advanced Placement courses; honors; and International Baccalaureate courses; as well as a myriad of opportunities for students to be actively involved including organizations and athletics. While in high school, Eddie enrolled in AP US History, AP Psychology, and AP Physics. 100 percent of students meet state standardized test scores. Before graduating high school, his father passed away and he exclaims that this motivated him to pursue the highest degree. “Although my father didn’t finish high school – he always said my sons will finish high school – once accomplished - I’ve done my part. The bare minimal is that you can go on to undergraduate. He took a turn for the worst and I was done with Lake Wood. I wanted to be close to home but I needed my own space.”

As an undergraduate at Carrington University, Eddie maintained a highly competitive GPA (3.8/4.0 scale) and was admitted through a program for minority students that had high academic achievements (he also received a tuition waiver as a result of participation). “If memory serves correct – it’s a scholarship for underrepresented students to attract them to enroll in undergraduate degree at Carrington University. Deferring costs of attending the university. It
was automatically given to me – I may have checked the box to say I was interested but I do not remember.”

As a Global Studies major – he studied abroad several times and was inspired to work in the business field.” I have always loved all aspects of international business. For example, one of my interests is why large American cooperation’s open locations in other countries and how social movements develop as a result of their entry into the marketplace. Throughout undergraduate, I have had the opportunity to travel the world and observe these businesses and the impacts they have on its people. I continue this travel today as graduate student – most recently I traveled to Brazil. I earned my certificate in international business from the College of Business while majoring in Global Studies in a different college. Eddie also has the distinction of participating in both the Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) and Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program. As a participant in both programs he exclaims “I really learned about graduate school and its importance there – I knew it was an option thereafter.”

Currently, Eddie is a 3rd year PhD student at Carrington University in the College of Business with a focus on International Business. “The seeds for graduate school were planted during my sophomore year as a McNair Scholar. I knew nothing about graduate school at the time. It shaped my mind as a Black male. Upon earning his PhD, Eddie wants to pursue the professoriate and inspire the next generation of Black male scholars in Business.

*Introducing Daniel*

Daniel is from the Island of New North located in the Caribbean with a population of 1,300,000. The major ethnic group of the island is Black; but other ethnic groups include White, Asian, and Middle Eastern. Daniel comes from a middle class family – both his mom and dad
attended college but did not graduate. His mom is a nurse and his father owned a grocery store and was involved in politics on the island.

While in high school, Daniel maintained a 4.0 GPA and was enrolled in several honors and upper level courses for math. His interest in learning about math and problem solving was developed since his youth. While in undergraduate at one of the top institutions in the Caribbean, Daniel earned numerous awards for mathematics. He remained in the Caribbean throughout his master’s program but visited the United States many times due to many of his family living across the country. Daniel asserts that because of this, he is very familiar with the issues that African American (born) residents face – especially when it comes to mathematics education.

Currently, Daniel is a 3rd year PhD student in Mathematics Education at Carrington University. It is important to observe that Daniel began his doctoral studies in the Department of Mathematics; however, later switched to the College of Education to earn his doctoral degree in Mathematics Education. Daniel notes that his true passion is helping underrepresented youth gain the mathematical skills needed to pursue STEM degrees. In chapter 5, we will examine Daniel’s initial reception at Carrington University in the Department of Mathematics which may be an additional probable cause for his switch to Mathematics Education.

Daniel’s academic achievements include maintaining a perfect 4.0 GPA and earning awards for both research and teaching of mathematics. Daniel also has the distinction of being a Fulbright Fellow. Daniel “My graduate field is in math education – originally, I wanted always to get a PhD in math; however, I am very passionate about teaching and instruction in the classroom. I had already did a research degree in math in New North Island and I came here and did a master’s – but, teaching is something that I am very passionate about. I am interested in how students learn and how teachers come up with their pedagogical knowledge I realized that I
wanted to do a PhD in something useful that would keep me still in the classroom and deal with younger students not just college students – so I decided to do math education.” After earning the PhD, Daniel plans to return to his country and work in mathematics education. His ultimate goal would be to come back to the United States and work with underrepresented students in math classes across the country.

*Introducing John*

Born to a military family in Due North County – John traveled the country in his formative years. John’s Mom passed away from cancer at an early age which resulted in him being raised by his father and later his grandparents (on his Black side). The population of Due North County is 120,310 where 82.0 percent of residents are White, 12.6 percent are African American; 0.3 percent are Native American; 1.0 percent are Asian; 0.1 are Pacific Islander; 1.3 percent are from other ethnicities. The median income is $35,947. John has one sibling and both his mom and dad attended college but did not graduate.

“I am bi-racial – my mom was a white man and my father is a Black man. I was born to a military family (as my father was in the Air Force). As a result, my family lived all over the country. We eventually came settle in Due North County. I also lived with my grandparents who helped raise me a good chunk (about half my life) in Due North. They shared a lot of responsibility. My mother passed away when I was in the first grade from cancer so that had a big effect on my family and my life of course – so that caused my father (he went) through a window of depression. So I went to live with my grandparents while he stayed in the military. That had a big effect on my upbringing. I was raised by my dad’s parents – so a Black family – in the Black church. They always preached the importance of going to school and learning what you can and trying to get a good job and being a hard worker so you can eventually retire at 70
and have something so those were the virtues that they taught me. I eventually moved back with my dad during middle school and that was not very positive – he was still alcoholic – he had a girlfriend living with him at the time and (I guess) allowed her to take care of us while he was away at work. In middle school I was raised in that household. I had some good friends so that really helped me get through it. As far as developing some type of academic goals past high school it did not happen yet.”

“Eventually, my dad sent us (siblings) back to our grandparent’s for high school… and things definitely got better for me. He eventually moved back to Due North County so he lived in the same city so I moved back and forth between his house and my grandparents’ house. I really did not get my head on straight until my senior year of high school. I was running around doing dumb stuff. My senior year of high school there was a guidance counselor who really helped me out a lot who convinced me that I could really go to college if I wanted to and be successful if I wanted to. So that was really a big shift so I went to college and things really picked up for me. Madison high school has an enrollment of 1,734 students of which 12 percent are African American; the overwhelming majority of students are White. Madison offers Advanced Placement courses as well as a host of organizations and athletics for students to be involved in.

During undergraduate at Vestibrook University, John majored in sociology and maintained a (2.4/4.0 GPA). He also received several honors from organizations on campus and scholarships. Currently, John attends Carrington University as a 1st year PhD Student with a concentration in Education. Upon earning his PhD, John hopes to return to his community and do activist work.

*Introducing Jason*
Jason is an African American male from Lake Wood. He has one sibling and comes from a two parent working class family. His mom graduated from high school and his dad attended but did not complete college. The area that Jason is from in Lake Wood has a population of 44,619 where 0.56 are White, 93.06 are Black, 5.09 percent are Hispanic; 0.05 are Asian; and 1.24 percent identify as other. The median household income is $40,142. The area is known for its high crime rates, and gang/drug activity.

“The area that I grew up in was a “negative” neighborhood. However, my parents did a good job straying me away from that but a lot of those “negative” influences happened often. With that being said, it taught me how to watch over myself when I travel because you never know when something may arise. I’ve become a survivor in a sense. It taught me how to develop life skills at an early age – to stay away from those “negative” things. We stayed in a tall white building. It was a bad apartment complex. Run down. There were people doing drugs in the stairways. There gangs most definitely. Unfortunately, a huge issue living there was shootings that took place. I would hear about it but never witness it. Actually, the reason we had to finally move out the apartment was because a bullet went through the window of my room – we stayed on the 21st floor– fortunately I was at school at the time. But that is when my mom was like – “nah we can’t stay here like this no more.” “Negative” – that life was a real trigger. The situation has not changed much today, Lake Wood is pretty much like the third world part of America. A lot of the negativity that takes place is due to a lack of money – they have to do certain things to survive. They lead to the “negative” outcomes people often hear about. Lake Wood pretty much has its flaws and imperfections unfortunately due to the media. Unless someone speaks about something positive – something that goes against what’s already out there or what is being shown.”

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As a student at New Shape High School, Jason maintained a 3.9/4.0 GPA and was part of the National Honors Society (NHS) and the World Language Program. New Shape has an enrollment of 1,467 students of which 2.6 percent are White; 94.5 are Black; 1.8 percent are Hispanic; 0.1 percent are Asian; 0 percent American Indian; 1 percent two or more races; and 0.1 percent are Pacific Islander. 92 percent of students meet or exceed state standardized score expectations. 31 percent of students are college ready (score of 21 or higher on the ACT). The school offers AP and honors classes and a host of organizations and athletics for students to be involved in. Jason played both football and water polo throughout school. He also enrolled in AP Calculus, and AP Human Geography. During his senior year – he also won the coveted homecoming court title.

As an undergraduate at Carrington University, Jason majored in Health Education and maintained a 3.1 GPA. He was also admitted through a program for minority students to help retain them through undergraduate. Jason also joined a Black Greek Organization his sophomore year and held several campus jobs ranging from Greek Affairs to working with students. “I became interested in my graduate field when I attended a Black Greek Leadership Conference (it was my first time going). I ended up networking with some other Greeks that were in education – this experience really opened up doors for me. I asked my mentor “how does this happen”? He said “this is Education.” I was sold after that. That was really inspiration in me applying to graduate school. I decided to stay at Carrington University for graduate school because I did not want to go too far. I was already safe and comfortable. I would have been starting my life over and would have to build new networks. I made the best decision to stay at Carrington. I wasn’t going to wait two years to figure out what I could gain from my program. I came in knowing what I wanted to do –I had questions for any and every one. I was prepared before the program
even started. I am the first to go to undergraduate and finish. I am first for everything. I do not want to get be content until I am done.” Jason is currently a 1st year PhD student in Education at Carrington University. Upon earning his PhD – Jason wants to pursue continue research and possibly pursue the professoriate.

*Introducing Stanley*

Stanley is an African American male from San Karlos. He has 3 siblings and comes from a middle class family. His mom attended college but did not graduate; his dad completed high school. Growing up, Stanley participated in TRIO/Upward Bound programming. San Karlos has a population of 229, 553. 50.4 percent of residents are Black; 40.8 percent are White; 0.5 percent are Native American; and 3.5 percent are Asian. The median household income is $40,266.

“The area I grew up in was high crime rate areas, highly impoverished. Growing up there – it was a struggle for my family - safety was always a concern – my mom was very protective. We had to come home by the time the street lights were on - it really impacted how I interacted with other kids. So I predominantly stayed inside because my mom would not let me out the house most of the time. It was a lot of aggressive kids (in school) that did a lot of inappropriate things like smoking, drug deals going down – that is what you will see. It was very accessible to some kids. I had a heavy amount of exposure which no kid should have seen.”

Stanley attended Olive High School where 1,498 students are enrolled. 0.3 percent of students are Native American; 14 percent are Asian; 41 percent are Black; 3 percent Hispanic; 40 White. Over 95 percent of students graduate from high school and meet or exceed state standardized test score requirements. While in high school, Stanley maintained a (3.3/4.0) GPA.
As an undergraduate, Stanley attended Mellon Point University and majored in Psychology. Stanley also participated in the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program. Currently, Stanley is a 1st year PhD student at Carrington University in Clinical Psychology. He also has distinction of being awarded the prestigious National Science Foundation (NSF) Fellowship during his graduate study. Stanley recounts that while his siblings attended college – he is the first in his family to earn the PhD. In reflecting on his interest in Psychology “My first idea was me talking to someone in a chair (laughed). I really liked to help people and talk to them. I think I am abstract and put things in a critical thought. That changed once I got to college – once I understood what it is. Driven me there continue with that degree path for the PhD.” Stanley further asserts, “I was the model child in my family. My mom doesn’t know much about graduate school. My cousin said what is a PhD? That sounds like the alphabet. I think it’s important we advocate it early – it gets to that point where you get a certain age and you settle into that working class life. My brother is 26 he got his 2 year degree but he wants to go back to school – he is very comfortable. African American males – we get comfortable making a decent amount of money. Not something you want to do for the rest of your life. My mom always wanted me to have more. She made it a point to allow us to make our own decision.”

Introducing Thomas

Thomas is an African born male that has lived in the United States since his youth. He is from Lake Wood where the population is 31,028. 98.7 percent of residents are Black; 0.5 percent are Hispanic; 0.1 percent are Asian; and 0.3 percent identify as other. The median household income is $37,809. His mom completed high school and his father earned a Medical degree (retired).
Thomas attended Carter-Wells High School and maintained a (3.8/4.0) GPA. Carter-Wells has an enrollment of 710 students. 4.2 percent of students are White; 45.4 percent are Black; 35.5 percent are Hispanic; 12.3 percent are Asian; 0.4 percent are American Indian; 1.7 percent are two or more races; and 0.4 percent are Pacific Islander. The school has a 71 percent graduation rate. Only 10 percent of students earned a 21 or better on the ACT. The school offers AP and honors level courses as well as organizations and athletics for students to be involved in. While in high school, Thomas enrolled in AP English, AP History, and AP Biology. He was also part of the National Honors Society.

While attending Carrington University as an Undergraduate, Thomas majored in Health Education and joined a Black Greek Organization. He maintained a 2.8/4.0 GPA and was heavily involved on both the academic and social landscape of campus. “Initially I came in with mindset of pursuing medicine I wanted to get my MD and always figured I would be a doctor growing up. In high school I was in a medical prep program; I was in all these programs that were preparing me to be a doctor. Then I got here went through undergrad and had that goal in mind; then I start preparing for graduate school I had the mindset of while working on my masters I would apply to medical school (whatever the case may be) – take other classes I did not complete in undergrad or retake some courses. But when I started doing research – I really liked what I did – doing health I understood the concept of population health and the impact it would have on a larger set of people instead of just clinical health that focuses on a particular segment. I started thinking about how research could be impactful – continuing to investigate the topic I was interested in – I realized I want to be an expert in a particular field and develop my own niche and pursue the doctoral program. On the surface it looked like it was influenced by my dad he is a medical doctor (retired now) but I never really looked at it because of him I always
enjoyed helping people and learning how the human body works. You know as a kid – growing up I always liked human anatomy and biology and learned many of those concepts. But, I knew that a doctor was because of my dad but how they did it – that was my own interest. Once I reached this stage – you get mature, a certain lifestyle, my girlfriend is a doctor (she is in residency right now) so I am still in it (the lifestyle) but it’s one of those things where I like my research a little bit more.”

Currently, Thomas is a 3rd year PhD student in Health Education at Carrington University and holds several positions where he works directly with the campus and local communities where he is laying the foundation for his future work as a researcher in the field of Medicine and Health Education. “There is a need for more black men in academia to be mentors. This generation of millennials – we need to find ways to sustain and increase retention of black males in higher education. And this lays a good foundation for them to go onto graduate school. They are needed in the black community. We need more black scholars to investigate in the academy and encourage black males to pursue higher education.”

Introducing Christopher

Christopher is an African American male from Sand Park. He has 3 siblings, his mom completed her undergraduate study and his dad completed his Master’s in Business Management. Sand Park has a population of 45,468. 83.5 percent are white; 10.7 percent are African American; 0.4 percent are Native American; 1.0 percent are Asian; and 1.1 percent are other races. The median income is $36,258.

“I am the youngest of four – family of six. I was born in the western part of the United States – lived there for several years. We came from meager beginnings. All six of us lived in a
motor home in one of the park systems in the city. Those beginnings provided the fertilizer to propel my future. Due to my grandfather’s death we started a new life in Sand Park. I had some success as a student, I was a young black male in a predominantly white area. Sand Park is not historically friendly to African Americans. Subsequent achievements in life gave me justification for striving for even more. My mantra – “to whom much is given much is expected” and we never had a ton of money but I was given a lot just from the privilege of my grandfather legacy and parent’s legacy. Because of their legacy – a lot of things I have done is in correlation to them. I bring a lot of entrepreneur thinking to this graduate experience – entrepreneurship has been part of my family life for decades. Out west I mentioned that is where I was born – my parents owned about five pharmacies: My mom graduated with a degree in pharmacy and my dad graduated with a degree in business. So you can see where there roles in that business played out. I had experience in entrepreneurship in my young age. Entrepreneur is volatile – but it can provide a lifestyle something I am interested in in.”

Christopher attended Chancellor High School – which enrolls 2,035 students. 12 percent of students are African American. The school offers AP classes as well as opportunities for students to participate in organizations and athletics. Christopher maintained a 4.1/4.0 GPA and was also part of the National Honor Society. From elementary through graduation, he was also part of the Gold Achievement Program where all of his classes translated as advanced hours. He enrolled in AP Calculus, AP History, AP History, AP Biology, and AP Spanish.

As an undergraduate at Opax State, Christopher was part of a research program that laid the foundation for him to pursue the PhD. He also joined a Black Greek Organization and maintained a 3.7/4.0 GPA while majoring in Business. Christopher notes that everyone in his family is Greek – it was more or less expected that he would be one too. Christopher recounts his
interest in Business “I was about eight years old when my future (seed) began to become fertilized. My dad, I and brother did a business venture. I was directly in the market contacting business whether they wanted vending machines. That questions of why people in buying things was always very interesting to me. That has snowballed over time to applying to college – I majored in business and marketing and wanted to know more as to why people buy things. Specifically going into graduate school – the seed fertilized – I received a Scholarship in 2008 and was paired with a tenured faculty member in Marketing – I was his RA freshman year. I stepped foot on campus I was researching marketing in his lab. First year I was in his lab researching. Business was the way to go and going to graduate school was the way to get that key to success – it would provide stability to my family. I knew the PhD was for me.”

Currently, Christopher is a 1st year PhD student at Carrington University with a concentration in Business Marketing. He is coming from working full time for two years and is proud to say that he is a doctoral student: I want to make myself lots of money – I do not want to make companies lots of money from my knowledge.

Introducing Joseph

Joseph is an African American male from San Karlos. The area that Joseph is from has a population of 229,553 where 50.4 percent of the population is Black. The median income of the area is $30,328. Joseph attended Libbyville High School where 75 percent of students graduate from high school. While in high school – Joseph played football all four years.

While in undergraduate, Joseph attended Bellview College which has designation as a Historically Black Institution or University (HBCU). He also played football all four years of undergraduate and earned an NCAA Football Award. Joseph also participated in the McNair
Scholars Research Program which he notes opened his eyes toward graduate education. He also joined a Black Greek Organization. Joseph notes that he lived at home during his undergraduate. After graduating early from high school, Joseph enrolled in a graduate program at his undergraduate institution and earned a dual degree in history and education. Soon thereafter, he began working in the local school district. “In regards to my mentor in undergraduate – he writes on history. He pushed well forced upon us subject matter and I took a liking to it. And that really plays a role why I am here studying history. I am a product of an urban environment. My father passing left a void in my life. I filled that up with achievement. His passing made me strive to be better.” Currently, Joseph is a 2nd year PhD student at Carrington University with a concentration in History. “I have always been interested in history and education. I took a liking to the subject area early on and what is why I have chosen to pursue a PhD in it. After earning the PhD – Joseph plans to enter professoriate.

Introducing Mike

Mike is an African American male from East Side Heights. He has six siblings, his mom completed college and his dad attended but did not complete college. East Side Heights has a population of 32,430 of which 23.18 percent are White; 72.11 are Black; 0.2 percent are Native American; 2.21, Asian; 0.02 are Pacific Islander; and 0.54 percent are from other races. The median income is $59,789. “I am from East Side Heights – I loved it there– it’s very special place for me - both my parents are from there. Majority Black people live there – you always stuff see going on. After I graduated from high school – I went to Farley University (internationally known research university) – I had a very rough time there. I decided to leave and go to Samson State back home. I had a blast and it helped prepare me for graduate school. I was lucky enough where I had an advisor my junior year of undergraduate that grew up in same
surroundings I did. I also had a notable scientist that believes in me. Despite me not being the best candidate on paper – he took me under his wing. Originally I wanted to do mechanical engineering working with planes and cars. But I did Physics but it was too hard at Farley University. Electrical engineering was too limited - you do not create new things. I wanted to be Scientific – so I chose Materials Science. I was always good at math in school and always into science.”

Mike attended East Side Prep High School which enrolls 1, 379 students of which 94.6 percent are Black. While in high school, Eric enrolled in AP Calculus AB, AP Economics, AP Biology and AP Chemistry. He maintained a 3.3/4.0 GPA. His school also offered organizations and athletic opportunities for students. He also played on the football year.

For undergraduate, Mike first attended Farley University (Ivy League school) but after one year transferred to an HBCU. He maintained a 3.14/4.0 GPA and earned several honors from engineering and science organizations around the country. Mike also participated in the Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) at Carrington University during his sophomore year.

Mike is currently a 3rd year PhD student in Materials Engineering at Carrington University. “I wanted to do mechanical engineering working with planes and cars. But I did Physics but it was too hard at UOC. Electrical engineering was too limited - you do not create new things. I wanted to be Scientific – so I chose materials science. I was always good at math in school and always into science.” After earning the PhD – Mike plans to give back to his community by opening a recreational center focusing on athletics; later, he plans to pursue the professoriate.

Introducing Charles
Charles is an African American and Native American (Saginaw Chippewa) male from Ocean View. The population of Ocean View is 114,297 where 61.2 percent are White; 23.7 percent are Black; 0.8 percent are Native American; 3.7 percent are Asian; 0.04 percent are Pacific Islander; and 4.3 percent are from other races. The median income is $41,283. Charles recounts “It was only a few blocks away from a street called Newman Street, which was notorious for drug dealing (crack), prostitution, and gang activity (mostly Vice Lords; I knew many). It was very dangerous when I was a child. Charles has 4 siblings. “My mother is black (or African American - I use the term black). My father is Saginaw Chippewa - I do not use the term mixed race but mixed heritage to describe myself. I say mixed-race because “Race can easily be equated with blood which can be scientific. I come from two cultures: one being black and the other Saginaw Chippewa – and for me those are combined pretty well. For me there is no difference in how I embody and interact with these on a daily basis.” On being Native American “Education was always something they valued out of their boarding school experience.”

“My father wasn’t around for the most part – so my mother was a single mother who raised five children by herself. She kept us in school – how she did that still amazes me – kept food on the table – the basic necessities. I grew up poor but I think most people that do you do not realize it until you grow up and reflect back and actually we didn’t have much. I remember moments of being poor. She maintained that school was important for us. While she did not have social capital about programming – I remember my 5th grade teacher (a black woman) [I had a twin sister] would always encourage us to be successful. Whenever our school needed a representative of something – she would always pick one of us.”

While in high school, Charles attended Practice High School. The schools enrolls 1,134 students of which 0.2 percent are Native America; 7 percent are Asian; 21 percent are Black; 0/3
percent are Pacific Islander; 7 percent are Hispanic; 61 percent are White; and 4 percent are two or more races. Charles enrolled in AP US History, AP Government; played football; and participated in several mentoring organizations.

As an undergraduate at Rock Point University – Charles majored in Public Affairs and participated in the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program. Charles is currently a PhD Candidate in History at Carrington University. Certainly, as an undergraduate I was a part of (still am actually) part of a mentoring program (even before Obama’s *My Brother’s Keeper*) – one of my mentor’s started this program of the same name in January 1990 and it is still going on today. I am in the department of History – my focus is Urban indigenous history (urban historian) but I focus on indigenous peoples and their relationship to the urban place. Essentially, I argue that you cannot understand any modern big city without understanding indigenous people relationship to that city. After all it was built on indigenous people land for the most part. Currently, Charles is anticipating earning his doctorate in the coming months and applying for tenure track positions across the country.
Table I: Codebook for Reference

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<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>CITY RAISED IN</th>
<th>HIGH SCHOOL</th>
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As mentioned earlier in this chapter – Table 1 may be used for reference in subsequent chapters. It is very handy to keep track of participant’s names, schools attended, and where they are from. Appendix F illustrates additional demographic information such as AP enrollment; standardized test scores; and participation in organizations/activities. The next chapter introduces the five major themes the research uncovered as well as patterns for each one. These themes are also discussed in relation to the application of the conceptual framework presented in chapter 1.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the ten participants in my research study. The data illustrates the participant’s experiences of their journeys through various points of the educational pipeline. These experiences are highlighted through elementary and secondary schooling, undergraduate participation, and access and participation in doctoral study. The sources of data were collected through: (1) 45-minute informational interview where demographic data was collected; (2) the completion of a Demographic Information Survey; (3) 90-minute face-to-face interview; and (4) a follow up interview where participants reviewed their transcripts and any additional needed was collected.

At the conclusion of data collection – the information was combed through to look for the major themes across the participants: (1) Academic Experiences; (2) Integration into the Social Environment; (3) The Barriers “We” Face as African American Males; (4) The Impact of Social and Cultural Capital on African American Males and its Influence on Enrollment in Doctoral Study; (5) The Models of Success of 10 African American Male Doctoral Students. Each theme is sub-sectioned by patterns that are most consistent amongst the ten participants. The patterns presented highlights the voices of African American males and their journey toward enrollment in Doctoral Study.

**Theme I: Academic Experiences**

*Access and Participation in Advanced Placement (AP) Courses and the Effects of Tracking*

In high school they look at African American males – unfortunately, whether it’s conscious or unconscious differently. The track that I was on it did not end with AP classes. They were offered in my school but the math classes I took my first two years did not allow me to take those classes. – John
The access and participation in Advanced Placement (AP) coursework sounds like a common practice especially at PWI’s where the overwhelming majority of the first-year students have both taken and earned college credit for those courses. However, the offerings of AP classes is not standard across all high schools in the United States; and furthermore, the access and participation of African American males in these classes become dismal as John points out. Geiser et al. (2006, p. 77) notes that the disparities in the availability and access to AP courses among underrepresented minorities and others from disadvantaged backgrounds are well documented. For example, students from poorer schools typically have less access to AP courses than those from schools with higher-college-going rates (Geiser et al, 2006, p. 77). Every participant in the research either participated or was not offered the opportunity to enroll in AP coursework.

The AP program began in 1955 with the intent of providing students the opportunity to take college-level coursework and earn college credit while still in high school. Further, Colleges and Universities use AP coursework to allow high-achieving students the opportunity to place out of introductory coursework like mathematics and science (Geiser, S. et al., 2006, p. 75). The high schools that the participants attended all offered AP classes; however, not all participants had access to enroll in those classes.

It is very common for upper-middle class parents to assess and choose high schools for their children based on the number of AP (and other honors level offerings) courses offered at those schools (Geiser et al., 2006, p. 78). Furthermore, middle-class parent’s work to maintain tracking because of fear that their children will be lumped with lower-class children and receive an inferior education if tracking was eliminated (Lucas, 1999, p. 62). Furthermore, middle-class parents are more likely to have access to the networks necessary to evaluate schools and
teachers. One of the biggest advantages that middle-class parents have that lower-class parents typically lack is college experience. Lucas (1999) suggests that lower-class parents are less likely to have attended an elite (four-year) institution. Thus, their understanding of what is required for college entry is likely to be nonexistent or inadequate compared to middle-class parents (p. 132). As we will observe later on – Stanley and Eddie are both first-generation college students and had had challenges navigating the college environment initially.

Schools with majority African American and Latino/a populations have fewer high-track classes, and even when they are offered, they are more likely to be taught by less-qualified instructors and be less rigorous (Oakes, 2005). Lewis et al. (2011) suggests that scholars sometimes refer to this underrepresentation of Black and Latino students in high tracks; and their overrepresentation in low and vocational tracks, as second-generation segregation (p. 30). Both John and Joseph had negative experiences in high school in regards to being placed on non-college tracks that did not end with access to AP classes.

I was tracked and treated different. They had remedial, normal, and advanced tracks – I was placed on the normal track. While my high school had AP classes – I was not offered those because I was not placed on the track for AP classes. - Joseph

There was no test to show I was prepared for AP classes because the test would have indicated that I could have gotten into the higher courses. In middle school I was good in math. I got good grades; in fact, all “As” in middle school. But in high school they look at African American males – unfortunately, whether it’s conscious or unconscious differently. The track that I was on it did not end with AP classes. They were offered in my school but the math classes I took my first two years did not allow me to take those classes. - John

Both Joseph and John highlight the issues that many African American males face when they attempt to enroll in AP classes. In both cases – they felt like being African American male excluded them from enrolling in these courses. Even more so, John was very proud of that the
fact that he excelled in math throughout middle school and could have excelled in AP math classes in high school. However, he was shut out.

The foundation for students to enroll in AP classes has already been laid during their middle school years – especially for math and science coursework. It is during the middle school years that determine whether a student will enroll in an academic track: a prerequisite for access to advanced mathematics and science courses. This is also important because this is during the time period in which minority (and female) interest in science and math decline (Clewell et al., 2000, p. 90). This is a very important finding because it is also during this time period that students are faced with increased standardized test taking. As a result of these tests, teachers rely solely on those scores to place students in ability groups or tracking.

Oakes et al. (1992) define educational tracking as: the process of school’s systematic placement of students in classes based upon their performance on standardized testing or teachers’ perception of their academic ability (p. 64). Palmer et al. (2013) asserts that academic tracking contributes to students’ lack of academic preparedness because students who are placed in high-achieving academic tracks are generally exposed to more complex and challenging classroom instructions than those placed on low-achieving tracks (p. 64).

My school would place students on a (rank system) from 1st to last in every class – which can be a very psychological thing for children at a very young age. I was always used to becoming 1st. I remember there was this one term I just slacked off and I came (there were 19 students in the class) and I came in 15th and my father almost blew the roof off. He took the television away from me. It started like it would be one semester (get your grade up) and when he took that television away that semester I went back to 1st place – then he asked did I want the television back and I told him and my mom: no its fine because I developed other habits like reading and a lot of other stuff so I never desired to have a television again until I went to college. - Daniel

Daniel points out a very important issue with tracking – the harmful effects it has on students especially African American males. When I was in 4th grade at a local private school, the school
emphasized standardized testing heavily. My scores did not indicate that I was on grade level in math and thus I was placed on a lower track (which was two grades below 4th grade). I was stuck and could not get out of that track until my mother eventually transferred me out of that school. Oakes (1985) notes that teachers strongly believe that students learn better in groups with others that are on similar academic levels (p. 4). It is very discouraging when you are a class one “one” only to be separated into ability groups; even more so when you are in the lower track it can be embarrassing as John points out:

I could have gotten a 4.0 in high school – I know I could have (I knew it back then). But I just did not have that kind of motivation. There was no incentive – the incentive was taken away from me because I was put on the standard track as opposed to where all the white kids could get some type of advanced diploma – but I was put on a track where I could not even do that. So that really affected me. -John

Research shows that low-come Black males are overrepresented in low-ability or remedial tracks (Diel-Amen et al., 2010, p. 64). Oakes (1990) further notes that low-come Black students are more frequently tracked into remedial courses in elementary schools, which subsequently makes it difficult for them to succeed in more intellectually rigorous courses as they advance through the education system. Oakes (1990) also contends that it is very challenging for students to shift to another track once placed on a particular track (Strayhorn, 2013, p. 64). Adelman (2006) found that when compared to White students, low-income Black males are far less likely to attend high schools that offer AP courses in critical subjects that facilitate college preparedness (Deil-Amen et al., 2013, p. 65). Ladson-Billings (1997) extends that schools that disproportionately serve majority Black students tend to have less “demanding mathematics programs and offer fewer opportunities for students to take such gatekeeping courses such as algebra and calculus that lead to increased opportunities at the college level and
beyond” (p. 701) (Museus et al., 2011, p. 32). Yet again, John discusses his exclusion from advanced placement math:

I am coming in from out of state from living with my father in another state and I am coming in to register for freshman year at Madison High – I always considered myself a smart student – things came naturally to me (math was one of them). In middle school I won a school wide award for Math – and my middle school was a lot more diverse than my high school. So I am coming into a very predominantly white high school and the guidance counselor tells me that they do not think I should take [and you know there are many different levels of math classes you can take] – they wanted me to take the lowest level math class. -John

While both John and Joseph had negative experiences with participation in AP classes. It is important to highlight that the overwhelming majority of the participants had positive experiences with access and participation to AP classes.

I remember on the PSAT in 10th grade I got one of the highest math scores in the school (they then put me in all honors classes). I did parallel enrollment in community college; and four AP classes. I remember one day my classmates asked Mr. Chung - Who is the best in math? He said Mike was the best. I do not think I was supposed to hear that but after that day I was motivated to get the best grades possible - Mike

My AP Calculus course challenged me but didn’t prepare me for college math. I didn’t score well on the test (placement test in college). I knew how to stick with the material. AP Human Geography was a different story- because Mr. Young had gone to Carrington University – he taught us like we were college students. He lectured that way – fortunately it was a smaller classroom. I paid attention to how he modeled his classroom – I eventually learned that’s how it was like to be in a college classroom- just in a bigger class. – Jason

I got tracked into honors courses from 6th grade on. My AP classes definitely helped prepare me for college. I remember AP History kicked my ass. I had to read and write a lot. The teacher would give you college level feedback. I realize that he was preparing me for college specifically for Rock Point University. – Charles

My AP classes did not really prepare me for college. My high school was big on students taking AP classes and telling us that we would earn college credit. In the atmosphere of Kirby High School – it was both expected that students take AP classes and enroll at a four-year institution. I remember I took AP Physics – I enjoyed the topic and instructor so much so that my original plan was to pursue Physics as my major in college. It really helped me understand the rigor of college: I realized that major was not going to work for me. -Eddie
What is even more important to note from the narratives of Mike and Jason is that their teachers while challenging helped prepare them for college level math. Mike was positively motivated after hearing that his teacher named him the best student in math. While Jason admits that AP Calculus challenged him and did not prepare him for the rigor of college; he managed the material. Jason also had a positive experience with his AP Human Geography teacher who attended Carrington University (as Jason did) – as that teacher taught the class as if it was college level. This is further supported by Charles who was inspired to enroll at Rock Point University because of his AP teacher. On the other hand, Eddie attended a high school that required students to take AP classes – it is built into the curriculum of the school. As a result of learning AP science at an advanced level – Eddie realized that science was not for him.

While participation in AP math and science classes are significantly important to the access of African American males to college – Clewell et al. (1992) cautions: even when AP courses in mathematics and science are available, students do not engage in them for several reasons: (1) Racial and ethnic minority students do not view these courses as relevant to their future educational and career trajectories; (2) many minority students view courses in advanced mathematics and science as difficult and do not believe it is worth investing additional time to do well in them; (3) math anxiety can cause racial and ethnic minority students to avoid participating in advanced mathematics and science focus; (4) perhaps the most critical cause of the underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minority student in AP courses is their elementary and junior high school experiences. That is, a disproportionate percentage of Blacks and Hispanics have been placed in remedial or general mathematics and science tracks, they are ill prepared to succeed more rigorous mathematics and science courses in high school and beyond (Museus et al., 2011, p. 32).
Being placed on a STEM track early on opens up numerous opportunities as student’s progress through school. For example, graduating from a STEM track in 8th grade may provide access to a science and math rigorous high school; which in turn provides access to AP STEM based coursework; which then provides access to acceptance into the nation’s top research institutions for college. Anderson and Pearson (1998) found that it was important for interest in science and mathematics to develop before high school to ensure adequate development through the educational pipeline (Clewell et al., 2000, p. 90). As Christopher points out below – he was part of a program that placed him on a science college track.

As a student in the Gold Achievement Program – my high school classes translated to AP courses. The AP class I took helped me for college. In high school I was on the Engineering track and was interested in majoring in that at one point. I liked that it included a lot of math, abstract thinking, problem solving, and critical thinking. Being in the program combined with my AP classes gave me really good prep for college. – Christopher

Prove Yourself

Proving yourself is something that many African American males note as a term throughout their academic journey. It simply means that “we are consistently proving our academic worth (talent) to those that question it. The memory that really reminds me of proving myself was in 4th and 5th grade when my math teacher would humiliate me in front of class by making me go to the blackboard and do math problems knowing that I struggled. In many cases, I knew how to do the math problems but they both made it a point to single me out.

In a study by Moore et al. (2003), the authors found that successful African American male student’s junior and senior engineering students developed an attitude of proving their “detractors” wrong in order to persist in engineering study (Jackson et al., 2009, p. 202). Mike confirms this argument through his experiences as a doctoral student in engineering at Carrington University.
I realize I have to prove myself a lot - you’re under a microscope – people notice everything you do and say. They see everything. One time this guy in the lab sent a long letter to my advisor complaining that I left the light on and I am rough with equipment. I know I wasn’t rough. I was learning. He said all these negative things about me. I thought my advisor would yell – because I am on the only African American in the department. Everything I do – one mistake it would be multiplied to the max. I have to be on my Ps and Qs because I am African American – everyone else can huff and puff once and it’s nothing. Now, I am the best at it (in the lab) in the country and my results are crisp. – Mike

As a Black guy – I had to prove myself a lot in college. I was always expected to not be as successful as I was. I am one of very few black guys who was wanting to be smart – that became my cause. I was going to be the smart black guy. That is what I was going to do. At Opax University I constantly had to prove myself academically. –Christopher

I remember I got a failing grade on the first paper – this white kid got a 3.5 and he went out (the night before) – and the professor said you need to read and write more. But that was not constructive feedback. He is trying to punk and scare me out of here so that’s not going to happen. I persisted and stayed. I constantly had to prove myself to this professor. –Charles

Mike’s initial negative experiences working in a science lab as a doctoral student are felt by many African American males in STEM fields. Jackson (2009) notes a few studies have found that African American males in engineering fields develop a set of coping mechanisms that make it possible for them to persist and complete their engineering studies in spite of being in environment of real or perceived negativity (Jackson, 2009, p. 201). Later we will look at Daniel’s initial experiences as a doctoral student in mathematics at Carrington University which will highlight a similar story. Christopher’s experience is interesting to note because he wanted to show that he was smart but faced barriers in college where he was constantly having to prove to teachers and majority students that he was talented. Charles experience in college emulates Christopher’s – he was confronted with a professor that did not believe in his academic abilities.

According to Weiss (1988), African American males often resist “playing” the “school game.” They deceive teachers, refuse to complete homework, smoke and sell “dope” in school bathrooms, delay the beginning of classes, and wear clothing and use language that is often
offensive to adults. Weiss (1988) further asserts that “These oppositional practices have been lived out and elaborated upon over the years, and constitute core cultural elements in the urban Black community today (Gause, 2008, p. 10). Anne Ferguson’s Bad Boys (2001) illustrates this exact point. Ferguson (2000) explains that some educators (both teachers and principals) often deny Black male’s youth the masculine dispensation that casts White boys as “just being boys,” while labeling Black males as “bad boys” who are innately naughty, decidedly disruptive, and biologically incorrigible. Gregory (1997) extends that “It’s no surprise, then, that Black males represent a disproportionate number of school suspensions, expulsions, and drop-outs (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 79). Later we will look at the long term effects these stereotypes have on African American males.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) found in their analysis of Black students that have the capacity to perform well in school; choose not to perform well in school because they do not want to be accused of “acting white.” Carter (2001) suggests that “Certain behaviors are conceptualized by Black students as inappropriate because those behaviors are characteristics of White students (Carter, 2001, p. 23).

I aced my tests in classes (high school) – I would get an A but cover up my grade and tell my friends that I did ok. When I stopped caring so much about what other people thought – all my friends rallied behind that. Mike is cool because he does stuff that no one else does. I didn’t expect that. – Mike

Mike illustrates this point perfectly. I remember in high school – it was not “cool” to get an “A,” in fact, if you got that high of a grade – the Bad Boys would beat you up after school and call you names. Mike shows a counterargument though; once he began to not care what his friends thought about his academic success; he realized his friends supported him and was quite surprised. In my high school – I do not recall that type of support from my African American
male friends; I had always found African American females were more competitive in my classes.

*Gatekeepers “Hold the Key to Success”*

Gatekeepers are people (usually teachers, principals, guidance counselors) that hold *the key* for students to naturally progress through the educational pipeline. This may also extend to coursework as well; for example, students have access to AP classes as discussed earlier. Oakes (1990) exclaims that “Low-income African American and Hispanic students have less extensive and less-demanding science and mathematics programs available to them. They also have fewer opportunities to take the critical gatekeeping courses that prepare them for science and mathematics study after high school (p. vii).

Guidance counselors in high school play a tremendous role in the academic journey of their students. As noted in the prologue, my experience with my guidance counselor was less than pleasing. As a result of my ACT score she had all but given up on me and encouraged me to apply to two-year colleges and work at McDonalds. This was quite daunting considering that our academic relationship had always been positive; yet, she was paralyzed by my ACT score.

Joseph has a similar experience with his guidance counselor:

> Because there were so few Black students and even smaller population of Black males I always felt unwanted. - At times it made me go into a shell. I would not cause any trouble. I was trying to stay out of the way. I remember the guidance counselor told me that I should obtain a trade. This older white guy was like – I should be a plumber – I was like I do not want to do that I will not make any money. He said ‘you people work well as laborers.’ I was like really dude? How are you going to say that in front of me? I was just like he is terrible so I hated meeting with him. I rarely did. He had all the Black students and he only pushed trade school after graduation. – Joseph

Joseph’s experience with his guidance counselor is likely experienced by many African American males in urban cities across the country. Even more so, because Joseph attended a high
school that had a small population of Black students – he felt unwanted and did not want to bring attention to himself by causing trouble. The statement made by his guidance counselor “you people work well as laborers” is a very racist statement. To give this context, Joseph attended a high school in the rural south of the United States. In contrast, both John and Christopher had a positive experience with their gatekeepers:

I had a guidance counselor that was a black woman – very positive. She was my gatekeeper. I was a black teenager who never had a black teacher before. Having a black woman come into my school – it was very positive to have someone take me under her wing. And genuinely care about me and my life. She was not satisfied with me slacking off when it came to my future; she showed me that college is a possibility and we made it happen. – John

My 1st grade teacher taught me 3rd grade math. She took a great interest me in and this was repeated in 2nd grade. In 1st grade I was sitting in 3rd grade classes. 2nd I was sitting in 4th grade classes. – Christopher

What is interesting to note about Christopher is that this early advancement in mathematics from his teacher placed him on a pathway towards enjoying the subject and later earning undergraduate and graduate degrees in Business. John’s experience is important because of the critical role that teachers play early in a child’s academic pathway; his teacher showed him that college was a possibility. Mike was initially part of a gifted program in elementary school but when he experienced a significant family loss and was forced to move to another community he faced barriers:

Elementary school was awesome – until about 5th grade my grandmother died. That really hurt me a lot. I wanted to be a doctor and after my grandmother died I did not want to be anything. After that, my mom moved to a Jewish community; I went from being in gifted and accelerated classes to all regular classes. By 7th grade I was re-taking pre-algebra – I was going backwards! They treated me like I was stupid. And I began to think I was stupid. I thought maybe my time being smart was over that is how I felt. The teachers would not listen to me or look at my previous academic records. – Mike
Mike’s experience parallels John’s – both began at new schools and the teachers did not view their academic potential as high. Furthermore, like John who noted that he felt *dumb* – Mike felt *stupid* because he was transitioning down instead of continuing in a gifted program. Ford et al. (2014) note that Black males are underrepresented in gifted education by over 55 percent nationwide (p. 62). Stanley also faced similar barriers once he transferred to a different school:

> When I got to middle school it was like I transitioned down – it wasn’t an upgrade it was a downgrade. The school didn’t have a lot of resources: teaching methods were horrible; they would give us packets or throw us in there and watch a video. It really wasn’t a learning experience – they really weren’t motivating us or trying to push us beyond our abilities; or giving us future directives. They emphasized more on how not to get pregnant and not doing drugs and stuff like that. I never heard anything about college or graduate school for that matter. –Stanley

Stanley’s experience is important to note given that during the critical development years of middle school – instead of focusing on academic progress – the teachers were focusing on not getting pregnant and drugs. I even recall being in 7th and 8th grade and a good portion of those years included teachers and other professionals telling us not to join gangs, have sex, not to do drugs, etc.

*Participation in Academic Programs*

Academic programs such as those with special focus on a gender, ethnicity, or group are very important to students – especially African American males. These type of programs give added instruction and life skills to assist with gaps that a student may have. Gose (2014) exclaims that over the past 15 years, dozens of colleges have started programs designed to get Black men enrolled and help them graduate. As such, Black men are significantly outnumbered and outperformed on campus by Black women (p. B4). At Carrington University where the research took place at the undergraduate level – Black women significantly outnumber Black males. This is likely to improve under President Obama’s announcement in February 2014 the
creation of *My Brother’s Keeper* which includes spending of $200 million to help young Black students (p. B4). The value of these types of programs is illustrated through Charles, Christopher, and Thomas:

I was enrolled in the Youth Development Program - I do not think my mom knew about it but we would visit the local university at the end of the school year. We had access to college mentors throughout the year as well. This program lasted from 6th grade to high school. That experience really helped me imagine myself on a college campus and it helped me connect the pathways that college was an option after high school. – Charles

I was enrolled in the Gold Achievement Program and received accelerated learning – I chose to be in that program. I remember sitting in a Board of Education meeting and them asking me “Do you want to go in this program?” I am 8 years old with my parents – they wanted to hear from me that I wanted to be in this program. Here I am in an Administrative meeting – in a conference room – with a bunch of old people. At a young age I was like this will accelerate me. As I reflect back, I understand the importance of that experience – but at 8 I was like cool I can learn more. In that program I was only black student as well. – Christopher

I wasn’t in the regular program my mom put me in this honors program called the Medical Program. It was a program that two schools in Lake Wood did – every class was honors and we got out of school late. It was high level STEM (i.e. Math, and Biology). I was also part of the Scholars Program in high school – I took college level courses for credit as well. – Thomas

Being a part of these programs helped place these three participants on track towards college – at least being prepared academically. From a young age, Charles was visiting a college campus and working with other students and faculty – it helped him realize that college was a strong possibility. At the age of 8, Christopher was invited to a Board of Education meeting and was asked to be part of the Gold Achievement Program – as discussed earlier; this allowed him access to AP classes and further promoted his journey to undergraduate (and even later, graduate study). Thomas, who originally has plans on being a medical doctor was part of a STEM program that placed heavy emphasis on math and science coursework. Several participants were also members of the National Honors Society (NHS) (or other honors based programs):
I was part of the National Honors Society – we just did a lot of volunteer work and random stuff. I did it for a resume booster (for college) but I cannot tell you the value of it. – Charles

I was part of the World Language Program so I was in all honors classes. Being a part of National Honors Society I was feeling myself. For graduation – my mom said “you could wear whatever the hell you want – you got the gold robe!” I can never forget it - I wore a tight Aeropostale shirt, jean shorts, flip slops and I still went. My principal was dying laughing on stage – in high school this is what I actually wore every day. I wasn’t really into the latest styles. Because I was an athlete, I got to walk around looking like a bum. When I came across the stage they were laughing – it was a real good experience. - Jason

While Charles did not see the value in participation in NHS; Jason was ecstatic to have the academic honor. Being an apart of NHS and other academic programs (like enrollment in AP classes) easily places students toward a pathway of towards enrollment in college. I had the honor of taking several AP classes and being part of the NHS – without a doubt I know my participation in both of these programs placed me on the path towards enrollment undergraduate.

All of these experiences are important and show value of their importance in identifying talented African American males for participation. It is also important to highlight the experiences of academic programs at the undergraduate level:

I started freshman year in an Intensive Freshman Seminar - we got 3 credits and it was 3 weeks long. It was very intensive. I had a lot of friends that did a summer bridge program at Opax State as well; but it was required they pass the classes in order to be outright accepted. – Christopher

Of all the participants – Christopher was the only one to be a part of a summer program before enrolling in undergraduate. His program was designed to give him advanced level training for college – he earned college credit. It is important to note that his high school participation in the Gold Achievement Program allowed him access to the Intensive Freshman seminar. He also mentions he had friends that participated in summer bridge programs. As mentioned in the prologue, I participated in a summer bridge program and without that program – I know I would
not have been accepted into undergraduate. Summer bridge programs are designed to facilitate the transition from high school to college and to place incoming students on an equal footing with others students (Fesnke et al., 1997; Kezar, 2000; Pascarella e al., 2005) (Tinto, 2012, p. 32). In my summer bridge program – it was an intensive academic program that lasted from 8am until 9pm at night where we covered the basics of math, reading, science, spelling, writing, etc. and had required study hours every night. There were no weekends off in Summer Bridge – as we lived on campus the entire eight weeks. Our acceptance into the university was conditional that we successfully graduate from Summer Bridge. Tinto (2012) notes “The long-term impact of Summer Bridge programs is even greater when they are connected to support programs that follow immediately at the beginning of the fall semester. This requires that faculty and staff of the programs collaborate, so that the activities of the summer programs are coherently linked to those that follow (p. 12). For my summer Bridge program, once the summer was over and we were fully accepted into college – we were required to be part of a yearlong academic program for two-years where we had additional GPA benchmarks and required graduate advisor meetings.

Because of my participation in Summer Bridge – I came into college with a set of friends and a complete understanding of the college campus and culture. As I reflect – I felt that I was a part of the campus and was socially integrated. Greenfield et al. (2013) suggest that bridge programs represent the most common type of support program for historically underrepresented and potentially at-risk students entering higher education. These ‘academic programs offered for students before the first-year of college’ are now available at nearly 45 percent of institutions across the country, although more common at larger institutions (p. 22). As noted, many of these bridge programs are intended for minority, low-income, and first-generation college students.
(Greenfield, 2013, p. 23). We will later discover from Eddie – that experience of social integration is not always a positive one. As a result, Eddie became an instructor for the First-Year Experience (FYE) program during his junior year:

> During my junior year I became an instructor for the First Year Experience (FYE) program in my college – it helped me show new students on campus all of the campus resources and ensure that they were being socially integrated. This was vital because I did not feel integrated at all during my freshman year. – Eddie

Tinto (2012) highlights that the popular first-year seminar serve, as they did when they first began, to provide information about academic requirements and an introduction to the intellectual life of the institution. Others take the form of college success courses, focusing on study skills, time management, and other skills designed to improve academic performance. Tinto (2012) continues – “some are offered to all students, while others are targeted to specific groups, such as academically underprepared students. Some are voluntary, while others are required of all students (p. 33). For Eddie, participation in a FYE program would have been integral during his first year on campus. Greenfield et al. (2013) extend “first-year seminars also share common characteristics with respect to what happens in the classroom. For example, an overview of campus resources is a frequent topic in these classes, as well as study skills, academic planning and advising, critical thinking, and time management (Padgett & Keup, 2011) (p. 91).

For the past seven years – I have had the opportunity to serve as the Graduate Coordinator over the First-Year Experience program in a liberal arts college at Carrington University and the value of these programs are amplified when students come to campus and have no idea what to expect. Within this first theme we have learned that participation in academic programs like AP, NHS, and FYE are all vital towards placing African American males towards the pathway of enrollment in graduate school. Now, we turn to a significant
discussion of being socially integrated which Eddie highlights above. As we learn from Tinto (1975) – students must be socially integrated into the landscape of their institution for positive academic outcomes.

**Theme 2: Integration into the Academic Environment**

Being connected would have made my experience better – I was not socially integrated. I wasn’t involved in any organizations. I didn’t have any resources from the African American community. I had a cousin who was rather popular my freshman year and he always invited me to kick it with his group but I wanted to be around peers my own age. - Eddie

Integration into the Academic Environment is a discussion that is important when looking at the pathways towards enrollment to doctoral study for African American males. The data will show that participants that took an active interest in both their high school and college environments persisted to the next level of education. In this case, 100 percent participants persisted to doctoral study. We will look at what the participants did through their journey’s to be active within the academic environment that placed them on the path toward academic success. As Eddie points out – he had a difficult time on campus first freshman year because he was not integrated into the academic landscape.

Tinto (2013) highlights that involvement is a condition for student retention. Educational theorists such as Astin et al. (1984 and 1993); Boyer (1987) and Tinto (1993) have long asserted the importance of academic and social integration, or what is more commonly referred to as involvement, to student retention. The more students are academically and socially involved, the more likely they are to persist and graduate (p. 4). Furthermore, studies have found that the more students are engaged with faculty, staff, and their peers, the more likely other things being equal, they will persist and graduate (p. 4). Integration is also commonly called involvement and engagement – these three terms will be used interchangeably but have the same meaning. The
more students are involved increase students social emotional support but also provide greater learning outcomes (Tinto, 2013, p. 7). Institutions that establish clear and high expectations for student success, provide academic and social support, and evaluate and provide feedback about their academic performance, and involvement on campus and classroom will produce a higher number of students that will succeed (Tinto, 2012, p. 8).

Social Integration in School

I am part of the yearbook committee; newspaper club; checkers team; arts and crafts club; and video game club – and that is just my meetings for today. Visit any high school across the United States and you are likely to come across students who are this involved. Of course, involvement in high school varies by the type of resources the school offers. Schools that offer students a wide array of options like social and academic organizations often to be the schools that offer intense academic programs (i.e. AP, etc.) as well. Schools in large urban school districts where the overwhelming population is underrepresented students – may offer only a fraction of what is offered in other school districts.

I won class President. I stumbled into that one. They had this big assembly at the beginning of school – then the star basketball player was like ‘hey I voted for you’ – I was like for what? Class president! I had a large network of athletes and friends. I helped to plan prom and other random activities. I also did this thing called City Interns – you work downtown in an office. It was fun you got to get out of school early. Maybe four of us did it out of the entire school. I was playing sports the entire time as well. I played football four years, baseball one year and basketball one year that certainly helped structure my time. – Charles

I was pretty much like the academic-athlete – I wasn’t the star athlete or anything of that nature but I was known for being on the football team and that came with social popularity– I was also known that I got great grades, Straight A’s in fact. My senior year – I played water polo – which is in the pool – it’s like a soccer match but you only get to play with one hand. Fortunately, I knew how to swim. I had role as the shallow end goalie – it was fun. I was nominated for All-City. One of my teammates on the football team introduced me to it – he said it was cool. It was the first time I actually learned that white students were in my high school – it was interesting. It worked out well – I had a
ball doing that. I also won homecoming court which was basically a popularity contest. – Jason

I was involved in this Black student association club; we did this one thing called Challenge Day – it was cool. It was like the movie Mean Girls – step forward if someone ever bullied you, caring is sharing, etc. It was weird for a guy (not just a black guy) to bring this to school. I helped plan this. It was really cool. I wasn’t part of math clubs or school focused groups – I liked more social things. I was the poster boy – my high school saw potential in me. – Christopher

I started playing sports: football, baseball – from sophomore year on. I started to engage in other extracurricular activities and I enjoyed it. – Thomas

I was part of the African American club - I never really grew up with that African American heritage like “who I am as a black male.” I wanted to learn more about my culture. – Stanley

Jason introduces a term that is very uncommon – maybe at least in its application to African Americans: Academic Athlete. It is common to hear stories of athletes in high school “getting by” and barely passing with “C” and “D” grades but because they play sports (typically football or basketball for Black males) so well they are given the pass. What is honorable about Jason is that he did maintain high academic honors as we have seem earning NHS distinction but was also part of several sports teams. I think it is also very nice that he stepped outside the norm of Black males and did water polo – you really do not hear a lot of black guys playing that sport either and it notes that it introduced him to a whole other side of his school that he was not aware. Charles was also involved in sports but also participated in an internship program that gave him real world experience. While this research does not touch on internship – it is important to discuss this is another important pathway for African American males. During my high school years – I managed an internship at four different places and I learned the value of working, communication, and time management skills. This also helped me connect high school to college because at many of the places I interned alumni graduated from my undergraduate institution. Stanley was involved in the African American Club as he wanted to learn more about
his heritage. Later, we will discuss the importance of these clubs to African American males at the undergraduate level. Organizations like Black Male Initiatives (BMI) and other black centered organizations “foster academic and social integration, student engagement, sense of belonging, and create a welcoming and affirming campus environment for Black men (Palmer, 2015, p. 24).

Social integration at the undergraduate level is significantly important to the success as students as scholars Tinto, Astin, and Boyer point out. As we learned from Eddie during this first year on campus – in the absence of social involvement resulted in social isolation and loneliness which can lead to withdrawal (Tinto, 2012, p. 65). For Tinto (2012), both academic and social integration influences a student’s commitments to the institution and to the goal of college graduation. Academic support comes in the form of developmental educational courses, tutoring, study groups, and academic support programs such as supplemental instruction. Social support comes in the form of counseling, mentoring, and ethnic student centers (Tinto, 2003, p. 4). We will uncover some of these forms later on. Thus, the greater the student’s level of academic integration, the greater the level of subsequent commitment to the goal of college graduation. The greater the student’s level of social integration, the greater the level of subsequent commitment to the focal college or university (Tinto, 1975) (Braxton, 2005, p. 67).

Being connected would have made my experience better – I was not socially integrated. I wasn’t involved in any organizations. I didn’t have any resources from the African American community. I had a cousin who was rather popular my freshman year and he always invited me to kick it with his group but I wanted to be around peers my own age. –Eddie

Eddie had a very challenging time during his first year of college because he was not socially integrated into the landscape. It begs the question – why was a student like Eddie left out? Where were the administrators who are supposed to be helping students like Eddie make the most of
their first year? It is also important to point out that Eddie is a first-generation college student; thus, he was unaware of what to expect from college even though he attended a high school that emphasizes college prep. Students from middle and upper class families usually arrive to campus with information from their parents to help them be prepared for college (Stuber, 2011, p. 4). These students have forms of cultural capital that students from lower-income families do not have. As students gain friendships and get involved in Greek life, study abroad, and other organizations, they acquire the social and cultural capital that allows them to gain access to valuable social and occupational opportunities beyond the college gates (Stuber, 2011, p. 4). Later, we will discuss how important forms of social and cultural capital are for African American males.

Social membership is another term when discussing integration. One has to be a member of the campus to be fully integrated and Astin (1984) notes that social membership yields a number of benefits that promote retention (p. 28). It enhances student’s attachment or commitments to the institution and their willingness to remain enrolled (Harp et al., 2010); which is important for underrepresented students, who sometimes find themselves out of place at PWI’s (Tinto, 2012, p. 28). In contrast, John was actively involved in an ethnic center on campus. His membership there placed him on a path during undergraduate that opened up numerous opportunities and connected undergraduate to graduate.

I was part of the Multicultural Center on campus – it was a home away from home for black students on campus. Well the black students that cared about their academics. It was life changing working in that office and being there daily. You got all your food to go – you ate it there. I had some great mentors there as well. The director really made it welcoming for me and everyone. They really made my undergraduate experience amazing. They helped me learn the ropes of campus – they helped me gain a Resident Assistantship with housing; and helped go to Belize. Then meeting my mentor who was the Provost (another black male) he showed me graduate school – he took me to Ghana twice. Those experiences have a profound effect on me. – John

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John’s experience at the Multicultural Center shows the value for these types of offices. Tinto (2003) exclaims “Such centers provide much needed support for individual students and a safe haven for groups of students who might otherwise find themselves out of place in a setting where they are a distinct minority. For new students, these centers can serve as a secure, knowledgeable port of entry that enable students to safely navigate the unfamiliar terrain of the university (p. 4).

For Eddie – joining his university’s multicultural center may have helped him adjust to college better. For John – he also gained a mentor that helped him travel and realize that Carrington University would be his next path for doctoral study. For students of color on PWIs who may find the environment unsupportive and inhospitable, mentoring can be a lifesaver (Fleming, 1984; Hurtado and Carter, 1997; Johnson et al. 2007). Furthermore, extensive involvement with professors and those with positons of power on college campuses have been shown to increase academic success (Bonner II, 2010, p. 72). For many of these students, mentoring programs and ethnic centers and organizations can aide in the success by providing both the social and emotional support for individual students, and may also serve as a safe haven for groups of students who might otherwise find themselves out of place in a setting where they are distinct minority (Tinto, 2012, p. 28).

I was involved in an organization for Black males in college. I wanted to identify more with my culture – specifically, African American males. That organization really helped me understand my identity as a Black male and trained me to ask the right questions and shaped me into a professional young man. – Stanley

I joined an organization where we did a lot of activist work and working with other organizations both political and minority organizations on campus. We worked together to change the local community as well as the Rock Point University community. I bonded a lot with the other students – especially the Black students, we would tutor each other and education one another about Black culture and programming on campus. –Charles

Stewart et al. (1996) confirms that black student organizations on campuses provide students a cultural and social outlet and serve to complement the other activities in which black students
can participate. Culturally enriched activities can enhance a negative campus climate and subsequently increase retention (Henley, Powell, & Poats, 1992) (Hikes, 2005, p. 26). Hikes (2005) extends that Afrocentric programing plays an essential role in the cultural affiliation of black students. Black student organizations were an outgrowth of the civil rights movement following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., most were founded in 1968 and 1969 (Hikes, 2005, p. 26). Brown (2006) found that student organizations facilitate campus engagement for Black men (p. 69). Harper and Quaya (2007) found also that involvement in these organizations provided black men with social justice related activities, racial uplift and black identity expression (Palmer et al., 2014, p. 69). Charles confirms this as his involvement in organizations was to uplift black students on campus as well as the larger community.

The voices of African American males are often, not heard, misunderstood, or simply ignored (Brown II, 1999). As we have seen earlier, the voices of both Mike and John were ignored when they wanted access to higher level courses even though their transcripts proved they could succeed. Brown II (1999, p. 135) extends that this is even more pervasive for Black males at PWI’s who encounter racial hostility and more disadvantaged by racial stereotypes. We will uncover the impact of these stereotypes later.

Voices of African American Males Experiences in High School

Justice O’Conner in her opinion of Grutter, suggests that universities must consider how directly, and in what ways, they want to be involved in the improvements of K-12 education and the K-12 pipeline if they are seriously committed to achieving a diverse student body (p. 183). Among some of the connections are: teacher training, formulation of strong university-school partnerships, and mentoring and outreach efforts are ways that postsecondary institutions can develop strong bonds and potentially make serious inroads into improving the K-12 system and
ending the need for affirmative action in 25 years (Horn, 2006, p. 183). These pathways and relationships are important for not only African American males but all students. Yet, the experiences of African American during their K-12 schooling is often marked by many barriers and are often voiceless.

As a young man you feel like your potential is sky high… you want to believe that. Then you come into the face of someone telling you that “we are going to set you on this track where you can’t even end up in AP courses” so it’s not like we are telling you cannot even sign up for them. But it’s like the track that I am on I could never make it to AP courses throughout high school which really effects how I apply for colleges and all that stuff and also as you are going through high school you are not being challenged and you can tell that they expect so little of you. My voice didn’t matter to them – they would rather not have to deal with someone that is outside of the norm. – John

In my high school – they do not give college tours - they give jail tours. They make it clear - if you keep up what you do – this is where you will end up. If you continue on that path – they will be in jail. Then you wonder why they are in jail. College tours are not free - jail tour is free. Kids are excited about jail tour but hardly any participate in the college tour. In high school - they make it seem like science is not cool but being in entertainment is. – Mike

My friends were out on the street they were trying to hoop (play ball) or be an entertainer. As I think about it now – the values were different. I was that guy that was the nerd, the smart one – I was helping others do their homework. The other brotha’s wanted the nicest shoes, clothes, and girls. If you didn’t get these new Js’ you are a lame – you can’t sit with us at lunch. I had enough stuff just to get by. It’s Sean Jean but it’s not Roca Wear – but it’s ok. You got Reebok but they not the new Js’ but you decent. It was like that for me. My friends had all the girls – so I wanted to live that life. – Thomas

These three narratives – while starkly different on the surface are actually more related than one may realize. John’s voice was not heard when he begged for admission into AP level coursework in high school; yet he was shut down. This had a profound negative effect on him. At Mike’s high school – instead of giving college tours – they give jail tours. And surprisingly, students are more excited about this tour? What is going on here? A jail tour? After probing Mike and doing some reason – this is indeed a real field trip for his high school and is more common than one may realize across the United States. It is like the television show Intervention. Finally, Thomas,
was academic smart but wanted the material possessions that his friends had. But his friends aspired to be in the entertainment industry and athletes. John further adds on his difficulty in high school:

Socially, I hung around the wrong people - people that were doing illegal things and just by me being there – I was doing illegal things as well. I put myself in a lot of situations where if one thing went wrong – or if the cops drove by or something like that – it would have radically altered my life. Not even the cops – if the wrong person – if someone had beef with someone I hung around it could have been radically different like going to jail for drugs (possession of drugs). Even though I never carried a gun or anything like that I had friends that did – and they got arrested for it. I would be in places that I shouldn’t be late at night where people are shooting guns, selling drugs, being loud, cops come. That is a big inspiration for me – spiritually I would like to think that these things did not happen to me – whereas it happened to so many of my friends and it still happens to people I went to high school with. – John

John’s experience parallel’s many African American males today – being involved in the wrong crowds. It is easy to get caught up with the wrong people but for John – he used this experience to help him be successful.

Voices of African American Males at PWI’s

Maxwell (2008) highlights some of the issues Black males face on their pathway toward earning college degrees: “the obstacles to black males earning college degrees are many, some seemingly intractable. They include inferior public education before college, the absence of black men as role models, low expectations from teachers and other adults, low self-esteem, black men’s own low aspirations and their tendency to drop out of high school in disproportionate numbers.” (Lang, 2008, p. 4). As we have discussed, when students are more attached to their institution it is more likely they will persist. Similarly, Hurtado (19940 and Hurtado and Carter (1997) argue in their analysis of “hostile climates” for minority students. The supportive climate of a campus fosters student retention by establishing the broader context within which involvement occur and are uninterrupted (Tinto, 2012, p. 66). Feagin et al. (1996) discusses some of the negative experiences of African Americans at PWIs: they felt that white
faculty, students, and staff did not view them as “full human beings with distinctive talents, virtues, interests, and problems” (p. 14). They also often feel anxiety and hear at being the only one or one of a few African Americans in a particular environment (Smedley et al., 1993) (Carterm 2006, p. 39).

I was recently talking to one of my undergraduate mentors – I still have a love – hate relationship with Rock Point University. It’s not conducive to Black students – certainly not to Black men. They try to weed you out early on and I think they only had one black faculty (in my college major). It sucked. I knew no one would push me out to do something. – Charles

During my year at Farley University, they weren’t ready for me – they didn’t have anything to cater to me. There were black people there but none with a background like my high school. Most of them came from predominantly white high schools- fairly wealthy or affluent families or nerded out their whole lives. They can’t relate to a struggle – the typical African American urban struggle – they didn’t come from a city like East Side Heights. Not to say I lived a rough life – but they had no appreciation for what it meant to be there. I knew I was in an environment that statistically I should not have gotten out of. I had a really hard time relating to other black people as well. – Mike

I was offered a Fulbright scholarship to continue on to the PhD in the USA so I came to Carrington University. Once I arrived - I just did not like the environment. It is one of the first times that I realized what it means to be both African American and African American in America. It was a harshest reality for me – it was not a good experience for me. I did not let it deter me from getting my degree. Honestly, the only reason why I think I got into that math department was because my grades were exceptional and they thought I was white I honestly think so. When I first got here everyone would say “hey your black – I thought you were white” they thought that from my name. That did not go over to well with me initially. –Daniel

These narratives highlight the exact hostile environments that African American males face at PWIs. For Charles, the new African American male faculty on campus provided a not so welcoming environment and was not supportive of him or other black males. Mike who attended a private PWI’s for one year encountered such hostility that it was so bad he transferred to an HBCU afterward. Daniel discusses his experience being a first year graduate student at Carrington University and being confronted with racism from day one. Gasman et al. (2008) discusses that the large majority of Black graduate students continue to find PWIs to be “hard,
isolating, and unsupportive (Berhanu and Jackson, 2012, p. 55). These three narratives are often the voices of many African American males but are usually not heard. This is important as we continue to discuss the pathways of African American males to doctoral study. Strayhorn (2012) notes that Black males’ experiences at PWIs tend to be less supportive, less sympathetic, and less welcoming than HBCUs for Black men (Gasman, 2000; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). Black male undergraduates at PWIs tend to have less sense of belonging in college than their same-race counterparts at HBCUs (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 80). In the next subsection we will discuss the experiences of African American males at HBCUs. As the research confirmed earlier, African Americans look for the increased company of other African Americans for their support and persistence (Carter, 2001, p. 29). The next set of narratives highlight the first-year experiences of the participants.

My experience at Carrington University was what I consider typical for young college students. I hit the ball rolling socially. I got to know everyone, I went to every party and I still did my work. I wasn’t prepared for the rigor though. I wasn’t prepared for the semester at all. I was just out here - it hit me all at once. It was fun at the same time. I took one punch and it took me out. First semester I took Intro to Chemistry and Pre-Calculus - I was struggling to take this assessment for this math course. Oddly enough, this one experience I had in Math was one of the best ones – I had a professor (he was an asshole - he didn’t care) he was calling out any and everybody. Unfortunately, I didn’t know what was going on in class but people thought I did because of my questions. A lot of students would complain that dude was mean and rude. He would tell us that he had to weed people out otherwise you can find yourself in some trouble later on. Once I realized I needed to get it together –it was too late. –Jason

That first semester was crazy – Chemistry was so hard - I did not understand anything. What did we do in Chemistry in high school? We spent so much time watching movies – what we ended high school with – we started off in college (that was basic for everyone else). I was like how does everyone know this information already? I would have to ask for help, tutoring – it was still a struggle. I started to lose the enthusiasm with MCB and began to understand the power of these weed out courses. You try to balance it out with trying to keep up with friends, going to the gym, hopping, and going to eat on campus at night. Worst of all was chilling at another residence hall - If you didn’t live there you wouldn’t leave there until the last bus left. I wanted to be around all the girls there and my boys cut hair too. By the time you get home – you got homework to do. – Thomas
At Vestibrook University, I was surrounded around people that cared about my culture, myself, and cared about me. That made a huge difference and they cared about my academic progression. – John

Both John and Jason performed exceptionally well in high school but were not prepared for the rigor of undergraduate. For them, the social aspects combined with college level work made their transition challenging. As you recall, John had a horrible high school experience but notes that his undergraduate was a more positive environment – mainly because of his work at the Multicultural Center as we learned earlier.

It would have been nice to have smaller retreats my freshman year. I didn’t feel as connected with the African American community my freshman year (which was partly my fault). I didn’t see administration reaching out to me at that time. No one was pushing me to go into minority centered offices or to utilize Black resources on campus. Especially my first semester I had no clue that there was a place just for Black students. I wasn’t receiving emails, or part of a list serve.

We have previously learned of Eddie’s difficulty adjusting on campus. Here, Eddie states that no administrators reached out to him nor was he aware of the multitude of resources available to students on campus. As we have discussed earlier, research shows that Black men experience more racial hostility at PWIs and are more likely to be victims of racial hostility and stereotypes than their black female counterparts (Balwin and Fisler, 2009, p. 184). While PWIs are shown to be hostile environments – research has shown that HBCU’s promote persistence and enrollment in graduate school.

Voices of African American Males at HBCUs

As the previous subsection outlines – African American students at PWIs often experience exclusion, racial discrimination, and alienation. In contrast, at HBCUs, African Americans “emphasize feelings of engagement, connection, acceptance, and… encouragement”
Allen, 1992, p. 39). According to Trent (1991, p. 56), HBCUs comprise 9 percent of the nation’s baccalaureate-granting institutions, but “account for more than 30 percent of all the Bachelor’s degrees awarded to African Americans. Yet, Jackson and Swan (1991, p. 127) caution that HBCUs have been described as providing a “very mediocre educational experience” given their comparative lack of resources. Palmer (2001b) attended a HBCU for graduate school and confirms that environment is more supportive that increased motivation and self-efficacy. But notes being disengaged by the funding disparity between HBCUs and their PWI counterparts, which forced faculty at HBCUs to teach more classes and be less engaged with research (Palmer, 2009, p. 42). HBCUs are able to “create a social–psychological campus climate that not only fosters students’ satisfaction, sense of community, and adjustment to college, but also increases the likelihood of persistence and degree completion (Bohr et al. 1995, p. 82) (Carter, 2001, p. 40. Furthermore, Fleming (1984) found that HBCU’s facilitate students’ academic development in three ways: friendship among peers, faculty, and staff; participation in the life of the campus; and the feelings of academic success (Carter, 2001, p. 41).

African American students who attend HBCUs are more likely to enroll in graduate programs if they attended an HBCU for their undergraduate degrees (Barnes, 2010; Gasman et al., 2007). Also, evidence that suggests being involved and participating in undergraduate research increases the chances that a student might attend graduate school (Hathaway et al., 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) (Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2014, p. 168). Hikes (2005) found that only about 16 percent of black students attend HBCU’s, but nearly 45 percent of those obtaining doctoral degrees are graduates of HBCUs (P. 63). Hikes (2005) extends, “These statistics represent students who were identified by faculty and/or staff and encouraged to dream dreams and pursue goals that might otherwise never have been considered as options (Gray,
This is confirmed further by a study conducted by Brazziel and Brazziel (1997) which found that “dedicated faculty, an abundance of role models, committed efforts towards mentoring, and student engagement with alumni as well as industry contacts are all important preparatory efforts towards eventually succeeding in graduate curriculum (Graham, 2013, p. 71). Students who attend HBCUs also gain access to social and cultural capital (Brown and Davis, 2001; Davis, 1998). As discussed in chapter 1: social capital are the social networks and relationships students form with faculty and administrators that provide relevant information and support (Bourdieu, 1986. Cultural capital is the knowledge, skills, practices, and norms values by a particular organization or culture that grants an individual access to power and position within the given context (Swartz, 1997) (McGaskey, 2012, p. 88). Furthermore, students at HBCU’s engage with their peers inside and outside of the classroom more than frequently than Black students at PWIs (McGaskey, 2012, p. 89).

At HBCUs – they always want to introduce you to a colleague or some form of undergraduate research; introduce you to an organization, etc. HBCU professors really look out for students unlike Farley University - they did not need to do that and did not care to do that for Black students. – Mike

Within the research study –two participants attended an HBCU during undergraduate. Of those two, only Mike was able to capture the full experience of life as a student at an HBCU. As a reminder, Mike initially attended a private PWI for one year then transferred to an HBCU for the remainder of his undergraduate.

First day there I met this girl she was so good looking –Farley doesn’t have that many good looking girls. It was so many beautiful black women – I mean so many beautiful black women. I start walking around – you saw guys with the afros, black power sign on campus, and fraternities stepping, and these beautiful black women – professors with bow ties and they driving these nice cars and I felt so alive there. This is where I needed to be – this where I can be myself – where I fit. And you see guys walking around thugging with books and book bags – I get that – I totally get it. The parties and people were
Mike fully captures the thick description of the landscape of an HBCU beautifully. He felt apart of the campus environment which was in complete contrast to his experience at Farley University where he felt the hostile environment in a study by Willie (2003) confirms Mike’s observations – a black male student explained, “There were Black dentists, Black doctors, and all types of health majors, business, engineering, you name it. All these intelligent [people] out there just really striving… It was very motivating, and that was exactly where I needed to be” (p. 87) (Baldwin et al., 2009, p. 87). Mike further discusses what it was like to be an engineering student at an HBCU:

I was the Thug Engineer. There is a bridge – right side was engineering and left side was main campus – when I was right side I had my shirt buttoned up and spoke proper English. On the left side – I dapped up – wassup man. I ran with a crew that pushed nearly a third of the weed on campus - it was our territory. Those guys from the city were gangsters – we were bold. We would date them to try to shoot up our school – this is our territory – you will get arrested not us because we go to school here. We were deep it was like 10 of us. We can call campus police and get you removed. Till one day – something happened – people in the crew got too bold. One of my boys was bringing trees got caught up with an off duty police officer. He came to chill with us and we see his face on the news. Things went downhill real fast. We are aiding a fugitive; another friend not going to class – things fell apart – things became a mess real fast. I was blessed that I wasn’t not caught up – I always kept my distance from certain things to not get caught up. – Mike

Here, Mike captures several key points. First, he terms himself a thug engineer – similar to when we heard Jason call himself an Academic Athlete – both of these terms are interesting and unique to African American males in this research context. Mike’s discussion of being able to code switch between being “the proper student” to “thug student” confirms the earlier discussions by the work on Cool Pose done by Majors (1992) – like a chameleon – Mike was interchangeable between the two sides of the bridge. Mike also discusses some of the negatives of being at an
HBCU; however, I will point out that similar situations do exist at other institutions and are not unique only to Black males.

Samson State does not have a good retention rate of Black male students because of the distractions: getting caught up with weed, getting caught up with females, getting females pregnant, getting caught out in the streets, getting shot, getting robbed, so much easier to get in that stuff. Unlike Farley – they were protective over white students – Samson State police couldn’t differentiate because it’s all black students. – Mike

It is also important to note that while Mike did not choose to attend an HBCU for graduate study, it has been found that HBCUs play a significant role in the number of Blacks who earn doctorates, especially in science and engineering (Redd, 2008) (Palmer et al., 2012, p. 3). Strayhorn extends that 25 percent of all graduate degrees in science and engineering fields are also awarded at HBCUs. Palmer et al. (2008) suggests that the HBCU type that Mike attended has several programs in place that confirm Tinto’s theory of integration by providing a nurturing/supportive environment, faculty to peer mentoring, peer to peer mentoring, establishing high expectations, creating student support groups, and by providing advice and tutoring services (Essien-Wood et al., 2013, p. 118).

**Involvement in Black Green Organizations**

Involvement in Greek organizations at both PWIs and HBCUs are very popular among Black undergraduates according to Sutton and Kimbrough (2001). Greek organization afford their members friendship/brotherhood, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for involvement in campus life and activities (p. 141). For black men, these organizations offer them opportunities to become involved in other campus organizations and for leadership development (McCoy, 2012, p. 141). However, Harper and Harris (2006) critique that for Black males, the popularity has declined; as chapters on many campuses have fewer than ten members (p. 144). Furthermore, Pike (2000) notes that involvement in Greek organizations may also weaken
academic commitments or detract them from the time needed to attend to the academic demands of college (Tinto, 2012, p. 65). Four of my participants are members of Black Green Organizations and share their experiences:

In the simplest terms – I came to college having no true direction or guidance. I did have the determination to do well. When it came to joining my fraternity – that experience literally was one of the game changers for me. Joining my frat introduced me to a group of men that are on business, smart, and still had fun. -Jason

I was the one who had to get my brothers academic strong – being in the frat as much of the benefits but it hurt me academically more than anything else. Trying to maintain a reputation – now that I think about it – why did we work so hard to maintain a particular image? Being Greek you have to be a leader – we step and stroll. But you are supposed to have high GPAs. But when you try to get everyone on the same level – it’s hard. – Thomas

I pledged a Black Greek Organization my junior year and was on the football team. It was an interesting thing balancing football, studying, and being Greek. It was like man I do not know what to do – it was great. Everybody had their eye on me. I was like who are yall – I was like how do you know me? They would be like “you are that football player; your that Greek.” I was in the social landscape of partying. Then one day the Dean of Students called me into his office because I was having too much fun. He was also my frat bro - he was like I need to slow down some and I did. –Joseph

My involvement in my fraternity was amazing – I joined my sophomore year by senior year I was president of my organization. I led my chapter through some big initiatives both on an organization level and on campus. Looking back as I tell that story – I realize I was just very fortunate. Everybody is part of a Black Greek Organization in my family – both my mom and dad are Greek as well. I know he was jumping for joy when I decided to join the same organization he was in. He didn’t really push it down my throat when I was growing up but I kind of knew it was expected eventually. –Christopher

There is no argument that being involved in Black Greek organizations are a popular social outlet for Black males; but they also provide opportunities for leadership, academic, and professional development. Later, we will discuss the impact of being in some of the organizations in terms of mentorship. I will point out – Christopher is Greek through and through. He is a legacy as noted that both of his parents are Greek – it more or less was expected he would join.
In the first two themes: we have discussed the academic experiences of African American males and their social integration into the educational landscape. As a reminder, the conceptual framework of being socially involved and its impact of persistence has been confirmed through data collection. For all the participants – they managed to participate in their environments in some capacities by the time they graduated undergrad. Even more so, this is important as they began to think about enrolling in graduate school. We will look at those aspects later. Next, we will discuss the barriers African American males face as students and in society.

**Theme 3: The Barriers “WE” Face as African American Males**

I realized that my winter stuff from the East Coast would not be acceptable here (gray fur hoodie) – I try to dress as white as possible. The first time I wore my coat with the hood and fur – I walked into my graduate office people jumped up and thought I was trying to rob them. - Daniel

I chose to call this section the Barriers “WE” Face as African American Males because regardless of social class, education levels, physical attributes – the characteristics described here is something that nearly all – if not all, African Americans face at some point in their lives. As described by Daniel – just as simple of how we dress becomes a problem. This will further be supported by other narratives later. Gause (2008) notes that there are dilemmas faced by inner city black males during his desire to exhibit masculinity – often grounded in “masking strategies” that require him to deny and suppress his feelings (p. 10). The African American male is highly attractive, he is perceived and perceives himself as the epitome of control, strength, and pride (Gause, 2010, p. 10). I am often confronted with these dilemmas myself – being an African American male is hard because it is expected that you will have a “hard core image.” Display an ounce of softness and you can be banished immediately and never get acceptance from other Black males again. As black males – we are often told we have an “edge,” – with the edge being
urban attire yet looking good; being hardcore yet charismatic; being rough yet sentimental. The following narratives illustrate these opening points.

The way I wore my clothes, talked, hung around, socially – everything was a problem. You are seen as a nuisance especially when they feel like they are not wanted. There were no opportunities. They encourage you to sign up and work a minimal wage job – working 40 hours a week doing something you do not want to do. – John

I dressed like a thug - that is how we dressed in East Side Heights. You wear all black - you do not wear a lot of colors because of gangs. Hooping shorts, fitted caps, banging my headphones loud is typical. I had extreme culture shock while at Farley, I wasn’t familiar with a lot of white people and they weren’t very familiar with African Americans. White people talk to me funny like yo man what’s good – I hated that – I had a girl ask me what it is like growing up in the streets of East Side Heights - Did you have to dodge bullets to get to class – I thought she was joking. This was a black girl to make matters worse. Who said I dodged bullets wasn’t no body shooting in front of my school. The way the students treated me, academics, racial profiling, white people, and the black community – I felt so alone – I just wanted to go home so bad. – Mike

I realized that my winter stuff from the East Coast would not be acceptable here (gray fur hoodie) – I try to dress as white as possible. The first time I wore my coat with the hood and fur – I walked into my graduate office people jumped up and thought I was trying to rob them. During academic setting or conferences – I make sure I am the best dressed. I do not like it but that is how the system is. Even as something as simple as a pair of glasses – even simple things like that. – Daniel

All three narratives discuss the negative effects of dressing urban both at three different levels: John feeling unwanted because how he dressed and talked in high school; Mike facing similar situations at undergraduate at his private PWI; and Daniel for wearing a simply coat with a fur hood in his graduate department. These are real situations; and unfortunately, society judges African American males just off of how they look. For Daniel, he was confronted with rejection in his first semester as a graduate student at Carrington University – this has harmful effects on students; and later will go in more detail about his experience at the PWI. Mike faced stereotypes from students at his undergraduate where students thought he dodged bullets and encountered racial profiling, etc. Because of the dress and cultural expression of black males – they are also often disciplined, suspended, and expelled from schools – especially during their elementary and
high school years (Gause, 2008, p. 56). That image as Mike describes is just not accepted and automatically gives off an aura of “He is up to no good” as Ferguson (1990) describes in *Bad Boys*. It is important to note that how we dress is very important towards “membership” in the Black community – if you want to be popular or just to be considered “normal,” you have to wear the “in” clothes, listen to the right music, and have the right digital gadgets to communicate with friends (Gause, 2008, p. 56). This has earlier been confirmed by Thomas – while in high school, he strived for materialistic possessions so that he would be a “member” of the cool group of black guys. In the coming subsections we will breakdown each of these issues with the narratives to support them.

Majors (1992) discusses *Cool Pose* which is defined as a “Ritualized form of masculinity that entrails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control” (p. 4). Majors (1992) extends: “Black males who use cool pose are often chameleon-like in their uncanny ability to change their performance to meet the expectations of a particular situation or audience. They manage the impression they communicate to theirs through the use of an imposing array of masks, arts, and facades” (p. 4). Again, these has been confirmed earlier through several participants – most notability through the narratives of Mike when he describes during undergraduate at his HBCU that he was able to code switch on different parts of campus. As noted earlier, if you dare choose to engage in activities that are “not cool” – you risk being banished from the popular group. Majors (1992) notes “Distancing themselves from uncool activities can have negative implications for how black males fare in the formal structures of school. Activities that are perceived as uncool are likely to include studying, going on field trips to museums, and relating positively to teachers. Avoiding such pursuits has the potential to
stymie enrichment and education (Majors, 1992, p. 46). We have heard earlier narratives from
Mike, Jason, and Thomas about the impact of being smart but having to “mask” that from their
friends.

In my department there was this mixed race dude (Black and White) – he was like you
should tone yourself down – I was like “what do you mean”? All the white people are
scared of you. I do not smile – I have seen people get scared. I guess my very presence is
an explanation of being a Black man in society makes people scared. And I do not plan
on changing that. We are a constant threat. –Charles

When I walked around the department there was no one that looked like me. My first
couple of weeks on campus I was asked several times was I in the right class – I got that a
lot. People asked me was I maintenance asking did I know where the restrooms are –
because I had an accent. It did not make me feel welcome. I wanted to go home after the
first week and switch institutions- I did not want to stay here. There was no other faculty
member that looked like me. I had a lot of opposition during the class people would work
in groups during assignments – I worked by myself. – Daniel

Both Charles and Daniel highlight experiences they have faced in their graduate departments at
Carrington University. Yet again, these are real situations and are likely faced by many African
American males in graduate programs across the country. Daniel, for example, was insulted
when someone asked him was he the maintenance guy – it is no wonder he mentions that this did
not make him feel welcomed and he wanted to leave. For many African American males in
graduate departments at Carrington University – to find Black male faculty is a severe challenge
as Daniel points out. Wilson (2000) notes that the presence of minority faculty on college
campuses is low and is not growing at a rapid enough pace. Even more so, faculty in STEM
programs is even scarcer given the fewer graduate degrees earned in those disciplines by
minority students (Wilson, 2000, p. 200). In chapter 3, we learned that Daniel began in his
Doctoral studies in the Department of Mathematics but later switched to Mathematics Education.
Daniel noted that one of the big reasons for this switch was due to the exclusion and barriers he
faced in the department of mathematics. Whereas in Mathematics Education – Daniel felt more
welcome and included within the department. Later, we will discuss the importance of African American males to the academy.

“To Serve and Protect”

“I got pulled over for no reason after class today.” I hear this from my undergraduate black male students several times a semester. The concept “Driving White Black” is an urban expression that simply means that the cops will pull you over just because you are driving a car while black. And this happens more than what is reported in the national news. Let’s backtrack – it is always reported there are more Black males in prison than in college. A 2000 Justice Policy Institute study found that there were nearly 800,000 Black men in prison, a number far exceeding the 603,000 who were enrolled on college campuses nationwide (Brown II, 2007, p. 60). The following narratives illustrate several participants’ encounters both in society and the police.

I am in my early 20s, Black male pursing a PhD in business- that is a shocker to 60 to 70 percent of people I tell that to. Some blacks are (even) shocked. Everyone else – there are like what? It is quite funny. I get that aspect all the time. We are looked down upon all the time. Every time a bulletin comes out about safety issues– it’s about us. Walking past someone – as a black male headphones on – they will turn and look (scared) – a woman grab her bag closer to her or slow down or stop. I face those two challenges in particular – I do not let it get to me. I continue doing what I do and excelling and putting myself in a situation where I can create my own knowledge, and later having speaking engagements to transform my community. –Eddie

You walk on campus and people think they will attack you. I was pulled over “driving while black” – I was pulled over for no reason. The cop said my car fit the description that had been flashing emergency lights on the highway. Then my accent (this is one of the times when I make sure my accent comes out). You are not from here – he says what are you doing here? Oh you are PhD student - then he searched the car- the whole conversation changed once he saw my Carrington ID card. –Daniel

I had on my fur hat at my girlfriend’s house during the winter and was halfway back to college; so I called to see if she could meet me halfway. As I was walking back some cops rolled up on me; and told me to put my hands up and searched me. I am like what is going on? They said I looked like this dude, I was like ok. If it wasn’t for the fact that my girl drove by and they stopped her she gave me my phone and she explained – they would have arrested me. At that point I was like there is something to this – it doesn’t
matter if I am African or not – the fact that just looking at me they assumed I was up to no good that was pretty deep. – Thomas

Generally speaking – Black males are not thinking about white people. I am aware of not keeping my hands in my pocket walking into a store – that is something I consciously make sure I do not do. They are like “Why are your hands in your pocket.” I have gotten pulled over for playing “loud music” – I was like really? I was talking with my hands and he (officer) was jumping back I know he just wanted to shoot me right there. It can be terrifying sometimes (being a black male). – Charles

The racial profiling on campus (at Farley) irked me. I got stopped by university police 5 or 6 times – by the same cop. I was like “Do you not see I have on a school shirt?” One time – I was just walking down the street and the cop was staring at us (me and my friend) he hit a U-turn – pulled out his gun (I was terrified): ‘What are you guys doing here this time of night?’ They start patting us down – I had on my big coat – school hoodie – all these white people looking at us. That was the most embarrassing thing ever and I was like they don’t want me here and I left. – Mike

These five narratives speak volumes about the experiences of African American males in society. Driving While Black is real – being a Black male in society is real. It is interesting to note that two of the participants were told by the police they fit the bill of a suspect they were looking for.

In the case of Daniel – showing his Carrington ID card was a “get out of jail card” – it is almost like a police officer looks at you different once they realize you are a university student. I have encountered a similar situation where I showed my university card and the police whole attitude changed. However, it worries me to think about that because what about for all the other young African American males who are not enrolled at a University? That really makes you stop and think and further, adds to the ongoing conversations about race and African American males through the Trayvon Martin and Mike Brown cases. This is also extended when meeting with professors at school. Wood (2014) notes that some teachers may be thinking, “Do I want this student to come to my office hours? Maybe as a White female, I don’t want a black male coming to my office to meet with me one-on-one.” (Gouse, 2014, B5). Keep these situations and narratives in mind as we move forward to our next subsection on stereotypes.
Stereotypes

As we have previous discussed – there are many stereotypes associated with being African American male in the United States. Milner and Allen (2014) note, “Currently, dominant discourse on Black males describes them as deviant, violent, intellectually inferior, and as Howard et al. (2012) wrote, a ‘menace to society’ (p. 89). Furthermore, teachers perceptions of Black males are often influenced by racist discourse about Black masculine performance in which teachers regularly interpret the behaviors of Black boys as aggressive, defiant, and intimidating (Davis, 2003; Ferguson, 2000; Morrow, 2005; Neal et al., 2003). Allen (2013) and other scholars note that these observations from teachers often result in Black males having higher disciplinary actions and in many cases, receive harsher penalties than their white peers for doing the same offense (Milner et al., 2013, p. 26). Daniel discusses his encounter with white professors in his graduate program:

A lot of professors would tell me: ‘You are not from here?’ – And I would say no – and they would reply ‘no wonder.’ ‘No wonder’ meaning that I do not fit into the stereotype of African American males from large urban cities – I came straight from the Island. As a graduate student in math education, that is where I learned about math anxiety and stereotype threat and equity issues of math. I learned about the historical perspectives of math. I learned that it is unusual for an African American male to be in the field of math at graduate level. – Daniel

Baldwin et al. (2009) note that Black male students may fear that other students, faculty, and administrators may view him as less than intelligent (p. 190). As mentioned earlier, many of these stereotypes of reinforced by popular culture and society accepts them. “In the media, Black males are depicted as gangsters, drug dealers, and street thugs. These images characterize Black males as aggressive, nefarious, indolent, ignorant, and brutish. Even positive displays of Black men are typically restrictive to entertainment and athletes. These media images overwhelmingly paint Black males as lacking mortality and being intellectually inferior (Wood & Hilton, 2013).
Historically, these images have been around for ages. Howard (2014) exclaims “Popular radio and television shows help to develop this narrative further. Amos and Andy, a minstrel show that became widely popular in the 1940s and 1950s playing up the image of Black men as being lazy, dumb, inferior, and dishonest. The constant references to Blacks being ‘lazy’ and ‘no good’ became staples of the show” (Howard, 2014, p. 33). Palmer and Maramba (2011) assert that the media (i.e. radio, television, print media and news) rarely highlight the positive accomplishments of Black men. Instead, they commonly use their public platform to perpetuate and instigate stereotypical depictions of Black men. The media, in this sense, widely contributes to the problems that Black men experience in education (Wood et al., 2015, p. 5). Gause (2008) extends that “We are represented as bestial, hyperaggressive, and hypersexualized animals who have no regard for our family, community, or nation. We are often judged as anti-intellectuals with the desire to only “shuck and jive,” “bunch and coon,” and/or “dance and laugh,” our way through society (Gause, 2008, p. 2). Brown II (2007) argues that as a result of these stereotypes – Black male students today, especially those in the most challenging urban environments, believe themselves to be victims of and within this system. This has led them to adopt a defeatist disposition toward education (Brown II, 2007, p. 55).

Earlier we discussed the impact of materialism for African American males. Conley (2010) discusses that “popular culture is flooded with images of the profligate urban black; films often depict an extreme fashion consciousness among African Americans (p. 29). Brown II (2007) notes “poor inner-city Black males may have become so commercialized in their thinking, as advanced via television and other media, that they presently prefer to engage in conspicuous consumption than education. They would rather assume onerous credit burdens than
to finance their higher education (p. 61). Both Charles and Eddie note their observations of

African American males:

Post-civil war you have 4 million slaves – now free Black people – what do you do with them? No jobs; roaming around; and displayed as black male sexuality as beasts. These myths remain today - Black men sell drugs – if you dress a certain way you’re a threat – if you wear your hat a certain way you’re a threat. – Charles

It is going to be tough for Black males in the years to come. There are already low exceptions that society has about us. If you finish high school people look at you like you are crazy. If you finish college people are shocked. Dare I say I am soon to have a PhD? I came from that environment of low expectations. Black males in my family are locked up or not doing the best they could be doing with their potential. But I know what society expects of black males – I want to exceed those expectations. – Eddie

We have previously discussed the negative impact that dressing “urban” has on African American males. Charles confirms the research that we as a group are viewed as “beasts” and this is a stereotype that follows us regardless of how much education or money we have. Eddie highlights the shock he gets when he tells people he is working on his PhD. This is actually a common thread amongst all the participants shared during initial conversations – it is a shock to most that they are African American male earning a PhD. I have received that comment more than a few times. I often want to ask the question right back – exactly, how much (if any) education do you think I have?

Racial inequality exists – I am not one to really advocate for that all the time though. True barrier is not having the access to understanding the system and knowledge of what resources are out there. It’s more so having the discipline of being around a group of people that will push you where you will need to be. – Jason

If you exert masculinity as a black male it is perceived as aggression. If you are overly masculine you are still a threat. Plays itself out pretty negatively. We won’t pursue education because it’s now perceived as masculine or not the thing to do. Black males do things that have lower return on investment – interacting with drugs, gangs, shady behavior like stealing and criminal activity. Some people have more success pursing education and living clean than the handful of really successful drug dealers but that allure of immediate money traps us. – Christopher
Jason calls for African American males to learn more about the resources that are made available to them to overcome barriers. Possibly, this will be addressed under Obama’s *My Brother’s Keeper* (2014). Christopher confirms earlier discussions regarding being overly masculine and that being perceived as aggression; and further, why black males do not pursue education. As we found earlier - for many black males pursuing education is not “cool” and would rather model themselves after popular culture. Brown II (2007) explains “those who lack father figures or who have incarcerated fathers, turn to entertainment figures, especially rap artists, as role models. The all-too-common-ghettoized music video fantasy is too many of these young men’s image of reality (p. 61).

We have now addressed many of the barriers that African American males face in society. These barriers have long term effects – especially for those on the pathway toward advancing their education. These barriers are important to keep in mind because society is not going to change and it is important that African American males understand the system of the United States and not conform to these stereotypes. As we move forward to our next theme *Developing the Pathways toward Doctoral Study* – we will discuss how the previous themes have laid a foundation for the participants to pursue PhDs.

**Theme 4: Developing the Pathways toward Doctoral Study**

Being in McNair made it more real and obtainable that I can get the PhD. Because I went to a HBCU I saw other people who look like me so it encouraged me to pursue a PhD. If he can do it I know I can. – Joseph

The impact of social and cultural capital on African American males is significant as we will discuss in this section. For all of my participants- they have been influenced by their parents or guardians; teachers; and mentors. And in some cases – participants were just “at the right place at the right time.” Coleman (1988) defines social capital as a resource available to a person
that exists in the structure of his or relationships with others; and that facilitates certain activities or actions (Jordan et al., 2000, p. 85). Bonner II (2012) note that “students with greater social capital receive increased attention and resources that improve their chances of success in the public education system. African American students who possess more social capital typically have parents with a larger family income than African American from poor and working-class homes” (p. 279). Furthermore, social capital provides students with access to social networks and memberships – which encourage students to participate; gain knowledge of opportunities; and provide opportunities to attain higher educational levels (Stuber, 2011, p. 14). In an ethnographic study conducted by Stuber (2011), the author found that students who had a close family member who graduated from a university served as a useful form of social capital for students during the college search process. Stuber (2011) further adds, for these ‘legacy’ students, the decision of which college to attend seemed largely predetermined (p. 39). In contrast, working class parents had less knowledge about what to look for in a college or university, how to determine an ideal fit, and how to get into that school once identified (Stuber, 2011, p. 40).

Cultural capital is a term conceived by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and states “in large part students’ success in public education is due to the cultural skills, vocabulary, background, and manners he acquires (Livingston et al., 2000). According to Bourdieu and Passerson (1977), students obtain what they term an ‘educational inheritance’ from their parents. For students with well-educated parents, their inheritance is often viewed more favorably by teachers, school counselors, and administrators than inheritance from less-education homes (Dika and Singh et al., 2002) (Bonner II, 2010, p. 278). Berger (2000) extends that cultural capital has a cumulative effect, the greater the early accumulation, the easier it comes to expand one’s personal holdings (DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985) (p. 98). Bonner II (2012) suggests that
inherited cultural capital allows African American male students to better interact with teachers and school counselors and to achieve greater academic success, based on being able to project middle-class values and culture (p. 279). In the prologue, I note that because my mother was working and bringing in quite a good salary; I had access to many things that my older siblings did not. Teachers and counselors while I was in elementary and high school did treat me differently because of that cultural capital I brought to school.

Parents and Guardians

The importance of parents and guardians and their backgrounds is important when looking at my participants. All of my participants had active parents in during their educational schooling; however, the amount of knowledge differed between participants

I am pretty positive my mom did not have the social capital or cultural capital to advocate for me to be tracked into advanced courses like many of my white peers. So I think I just fell into it good programs. I often say I got lucky in doing things. My mom would encourage me to read and study from a very young age. – Charles

I recognized that my parents really didn’t have this experience (going to college) – my dad didn’t finish high school my mom did finish high school but stopped when she got pregnant with my older brother [but went back to graduate on time]. I knew my junior year that I was going to undergrad just didn’t know where. I thought about Carrington University and HBCUs, but after my dad’s passing I knew this was going to be the path for me. I ended up enrolling at Carrington University – I still wanted to be close to my family. - Eddie

Majority of influence came from my parents – my mom worked in higher education – she was the Director of Diversity Issues at a local University. Her working in higher education – it was clear that I am going to college as it very prevalent in my house. Both my parents were schooled at Art House University – it was spoken of frequently and there was an understanding that we (siblings) are all going to college and graduate. – Christopher

These three narratives highlight the importance of social and cultural capital to African American males. While Charles and Eddie did not have the social or cultural capital – they both acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to make decisions about their education and future. Christopher, whose parents would be considered middle-class already had both the social and
cultural capital; this may explain many of his successes in which we have discussed through this chapter.

My main motivation was my mom – she always pushed us. I always knew I was going to college my mom made it known since I was in 1st grade. I definitely knew I was going to college in high school. My mom didn’t go to college so when I went – I really did not know what to expect. – Stanley

Tinto (2012) explains that many students begin higher education not knowing what to expect.

“First-generation and low-income college students, for instance, typically lack the sorts of shared knowledge, or cultural capital, that more affluent students and those from college-educated families commonly possesses about the nature of the college experience and what it takes to succeed (p. 11). Stanley confirms Tinto’s observations. I also want to highlight the power of parents and guardians on two of my STEM participants:

In elementary school I was lucky enough to have a grandmother that taught me – I mean she drilled the timetables in me – she made me do them. She didn’t let the excuse of me being too young pass. My punishment would be go do my timetables. In elementary school when everyone else was learning addition and subtraction – I was already doing algebra. So that laid a great foundation for where I am now. – Mike

My love of my math stems from my father. My father had a business – one of the things that he would show his customers is that he did not have to use a cash register – he would tell me to come and I would be able to check everything out. So I always had a natural ability of figuring things out – in that computational environment – working with numbers. Due to the influence of god in my life it helped me realize my natural ability was working with numbers and problem solving. – Daniel

Both Mike and Daniel were motivated in math from very young ages. Mike, for example, was doing timetables – it was required – even on punishment. This laid the foundation for him to develop a love of math and science and by high school was already working on a pathway towards earning a science undergraduate degree; and later a PhD in engineering. Similarly, Daniel was the “human calculator,” and this truly laid a foundation for his later career – earning a PhD in mathematics. Halpern (2005) explains that studies have found that children whose
parents are both physically present and attentive tend to achieve better test scores, and are more likely to complete high school and are more likely to attend college (p. 143). Halpern (2005) adds, “This explains why the parent’s – and especially the mother’s – own education attainment is such an important predictor of their child’s attainment. High levels of parent-child interactions generally increase the expectations of both child and parent (p. 144).

I did a lot of community projects because my dad was involved in politics. Usually a lot of volunteering like free tutoring for kids for free not for pay. Like soup kitchens – I always did those things. But I am talking so much about my father who has passed away but really my mother is the real deal. She is a nurse. Both my parents instilled in me to give back and help others. - Daniel

Thomas: I knew from a young age that I wanted to be a doctor (whether it happened or not and I couldn’t go home from college and say otherwise without being a huge disappointment to my parents. – Thomas

In these two narratives – both Daniel and Thomas confirm (as the other participants have) the importance of their parents to their lives and their pathways towards higher education.

**Mentoring and “Being in the Right Place at the Right Time”**

Earlier, we have discussed the importance of mentoring to the participants. Now, we will look at this mentoring relationship a little closer. Scott (2012) notes that mentors can be responsible for: (a) acclimating students to the campus environment; (b) informing students about campus involvement (e.g. clubs, organizations, activities) and professional opportunities (e.g. internships); and (c) servicing as guides as students continue through college. Mentors shared critical important knowledge about resources, helped connected students to invaluable information networks, and introduced them to engagement opportunity on campus (Harper, 2012, p. 75). Tinto (2012) notes that new students on college campus gain knowledge from peer groups and from older students from similar backgrounds who are already on campus (p. 12). Gallien (2005) found that more successful African American college students who had a mentor (or group of mentors) who encouraged and critiqued their work and followed them through their graduate school experience and beyond (p. 9).

I was fortunate that I had a good mentor who understood the rigor of undergraduate – he was the Director of Diversity Education and eventually became one of my frat brothers. During Undergraduate he was very formative in my development. – Christopher

In college, I became very active I was president of the Black Student Union and through the connections that I made within that position I formed a relationship with the Provost of the University. He really convinced me that graduate school was something that I
could do. The provost knew of Carrington University and referred me to it -- I visited and I knew it was the place for me. – John

During undergraduate - I happened to know personally the department head of physics. He invited me to go different schools with him. Both times, Dr. Wellington – a Professor at Carrington University was there. I had conversations with him. He was coming in for a meeting one time – and we talked about solar cells – he was adamant about keeping in contact with me and eventually offered me the opportunity to come to Carrington University and do research. I was in the right place at the right time. People will look out for you and actually want to help you succeed. – Mike

We learned earlier the power of being in Greek organizations for African American males – and for Christopher, the relationship he developed with one of his brothers was instrumental even more so because of his administrative role on campus. For John, being socially integrated into the college landscape connected the undergraduate pathway to graduate school – thanks to his relationship with the Provost of the University. Mike introduces us to the concept “being in the right place at the right time” – he was invited by professor to conduct undergraduate research which connected graduate education to his pathway. Later, we will discuss the importance of undergraduate research for African American males.

My GPA first semester was 1.8 – I was not prepared for that at all. I had to get a reality check from one of my mentors Ms. Wood – she was like this is not going to fly. I actually was not supposed to be accepted into my high school. I was one of the last people to get accepted – by the grace of god I got accepted but it was strict process on getting in (she vouched for me). – Stanley

Since 5th grade, I have had a Black female mentor who guided me and it helped a lot. Same thing with my Black female mentor during undergraduate – I learned that going to graduate school is about making change in the community. The money is cool but it’s not about the financial gain – it’s about helping people. – Charles

For Stanley and Charles – the importance of mentors were significant during their formative years. Stanley would not have been accepted into his college prep high school if it were not for his mentor. Charles maintains a relationship with his mentor and she connected the pathways from an age the importance of graduate school. Charles only notes that he is passionate about making change in his community – we will discuss that later.
I became interested in my graduate field when I attended a Black Greek Leadership Conference (it was my first time going). I ended up networking with some other Greeks that were in education – this experience really opened up doors for me. I asked my mentor “how does this happen”? He said “this is Education.” I was sold after that. That was really an inspiration in me applying to graduate school. I learned how to utilize a mentor. – Jason

I had a bond with my mentors – they were also my frat bros. They really took an interest into my development and showed me the ropes of being an undergraduate and applying to graduate school. I had frat brothers who graduated and talked to me about graduate school. Up to that point, I still wanted to go to Medical School but I eventually ended that dream a few months ago. – Thomas

As we saw with Christopher, both Jason and Thomas were influenced by their membership in Greek organizations to connect the pathways of undergraduate to graduate school. Astin (1993) suggests “The more contact students have with faculty inside as well as outside the classroom, the greater the gains will be with student development and institutional satisfaction (p. 70).

I also got invited to attend an engineering event in Europe – I was one of 15 American’s that went. I experienced the strongest racism there – they hated me there and treated me like crap. I was the only African American male. Every time they took photos – they made sure I was in it. The brochure has my face is on the front page. They gave me one of the crappiest projects – check for gas leaks. The guy that ran the program – is a prestigious black guy– one of the most influential people in the world. He looked at me as the poster child. But couldn’t relate to me at all –You can tell he never identified with black people- he couldn’t relate to anything. He was too big – I felt small around him – I was his little pet project. But Dr. Wellington, he fully believes in me – as a young scientists that needs some grooming. He has $10 million of research funding. I had a daughter coming into graduate school and so did he. We really have a strong bond together and put me on to a lot of great opportunities. – Mike

Mike’s narrative here captures the importance of mentorship of Black male faculty to Black male undergraduate students. It is also significant to note that Mike did participate in a summer research experience – granted the experience was not the best.

Teachers

This next subsection on Teachers highlights the impact that they have on African American males at different stages along the education pathway. We earlier discussed the
predispositions that some teachers may have about black male students. This research has uncovered that not all teachers are bad; and even more, not African American.

I remember this one German teacher – I was having a difficult time in the 11th grade for whatever reason (I wasn’t doing any schoolwork) and he tried to talk to me and I was like look dude I do not want to hear anything from you – I am not going to listen to you. The next day he brought me a book – the autobiography of Malcolm X – I read the book over a few days and it was a completely transformative about my identity as a Black male dealing with race and racism in society. He knew I would read it and I always give him credit. He never gave me an A in his class and I didn’t deserve [one]. Ironically, he is a reason why I choose to enroll at Rock Point University. – Charles

My AP Human Geography teacher Mr. Young – he was one of the best teachers there (in high school) – Irish white male – good guy – he always talked about Carrington University– “that’s my school!” - He was alum. I wanted to check it out, so I went on a college tour and I was sold. It looked exactly how it did in the brochure- I was sold that day. “If anybody can do this – I know I can.” I asked him for advice on how to get prepared and low and behold I got accepted. – Jason

Mr. Williams was this white teacher in my high school - he was really into physics but had no degree in it. We didn’t even have AP physics –we barely had physics class. We would talk about what we saw on the science channel the night before. I could meet with him and be nerded out. Outside his office I was not nerded out because I was on the football team and fairly well known. He made me feel like it was good to be a nerd. – Mike

As mentioned, all of these teachers are not African American; but truly had a positive impact on these participants. Charles was inspired by his teacher to enroll at his undergraduate institution. Similar story with Jason who was inspired by his teacher who was an alum of his undergraduate. Mike was able to be himself and “nerd out” talking about science and math. He mentions that outside the office – he was not nerded out because he was on the football team and well known – as the research found; sometimes it is not “cool” to be a nerd and showcase it. In connecting high school to undergraduate – teachers also played a significant role.

Mr. Williams showed me stuff that was important for my college application. He read my essays – if it wasn’t for him I would not have gotten into Farley University. Also, Ms. Jackson, she was my chemistry teacher – she would call me her school son – I never got expelled or suspended – she was the department head of science. She always made sure I would get into the same stuff as others. She would scold me and be like I will talk to you
later. She was like my school mom. At home, my mom and I had a shaky relationship in high school. – Mike

I remember my personal statement for Farley – I literally wrote a poetic metaphor between thermal dynamics, chaos theory, and finding your equilibrium attractor which is the lowest energy state which argues that in the thermal fluctuations over time – in its lowest energy state and I said Farley University was my lowest energy state. So I said it doesn’t matter if you admit me or not I am going to make it – I am sure they would love it. I even talked about my town. I just did this entire metaphor between physics. I could totally nerd out. – Mike

Two people helped me prepare for applying to college. There was a white English teacher who helped with essays and the second was a Black man I went to church with. He was an admissions counselor at Blue Island University – he walked me through the papers. He was very instrumental in helping me get into Rock Point University. – Charles

My football coach was instrumental in helping me to get to college. He requested our grades weekly. If he felt that we were slipping he would holler and we would get a horrific workout. He would be like “it’s time to run.” It’s like noon – he would pull us out of class and make us run. He pushed us to be on-time, our grades to be up, because (you know) he was coming. – John

I really appreciate Mike’s candid explanation of his college essay – he truly did “nerd out” and that narrative should be highlighted for other African American males in high school that are interested in science.

Participation in Undergraduate Research Programs (80)

Our next subsection talks about participation undergraduate research programs.

A teacher that I asked ‘how can I be like her?’ suggested that I talk to the person that runs the McNair Scholars Program. I found out that it was after the deadline – it was mid-November and this was January. The white female professor told me to email the director and CC her on the email ‘they are always looking for Black men.” Next thing you know – I got an email with welcoming arms from the director – she immediately responded. Had it not been for her, I had no idea that these type of programs even existed on campus. – Charles

Charles narrative lays the foundation for the importance of these programs on college campuses. Undergraduate research programs provide an opportunity for students to conduct undergraduate research at the graduate level in a field that interests them. Blackwell (1981)
explains “Many African American students have the academic capabilities to succeed in graduate education, but they need specific knowledge, training and support to be admitted and to succeed in graduate school. African American undergraduate students may not have knowledge of the process of applying to graduate schools, of locating funding, and how to select an area of specialization (p. 94). Morrison (1977) highlights several factors why minority students are less likely to participate in research and development: (1) they may lack the mathematical orientation of research and development; (2) they may have perceptions that research has been used against minorities; (3) they may hold the belief that most researchers conduct ‘pure’ research which is abstract and unrelated to the real world; (4) they may be more subject to have desires to do work that will help minorities more directly than seems to be afforded by research (Boyce, 1997, p. 94). While many of these factors may hold true; it is important to discuss the importance of participation in undergraduate research and its connection to graduate school.

Winkle-Wagner et al. (2014) found that involvement in particular undergraduate co-curricular or in undergraduate research opportunities supports access to graduate school and encourages graduate school enrollment (p. 169). For the purpose of this section – I want to discern exactly what research programs I am referring to. There are two types of undergraduate research programs that I was interested in receiving data on. The first – the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program which is a nationally funded program which is part of a larger program TRIO from the federal government. The second, the Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) which is part of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) portfolio mainly in the Midwest and eastern part of the United States. Participants may have participated in other programs and those will be briefly discussed later.
Federally funded programs like McNair Scholars Program are useful to reveal ways to better prepare students for graduate study. Winkle-Wagner et al. (2014) note that “These programs, aimed at deliberately preparing racially or socioeconomically underrepresented students for graduate study. For example, there might be aspects of those programs (e.g. workshops on financial aid, preparation for graduate school, undergraduate researcher opportunities, internships, etc.) that could be transferred into academic departments to help these departments reach out to different populations of prospective graduate students (p. 169).

Like McNair, SROP has operated since 1986. According to Trent (2003), “It involves the efforts and commitments of 15 campuses – the Big Ten campuses, plus four affiliated universities. The program has served over 9,000 students, nearly half of whom have gone into science and technical fields. The purpose of the program is to introduce students to the world of research, to give them a mentored experience, and to try to create an appetite that would encourage them to pursue faculty positions” (p. 40). Clark at al. (1994) note that only a few institutions have implemented formal and ongoing early identification programs and other graduate-school preparation programs for their undergraduate minority students. Given the special characteristics of most minority students, these types of programs can be extremely beneficial in encouraging and preparing minority students to make the transition from undergraduate to graduate study (p. 306). This experience is further confirmed through the following narratives.

Being in McNair made it more real and obtainable that I can get the PhD. Because I went to a HBCU I saw other people who look like me so it encouraged me to pursue a PhD. If he can do it I know I can –some of them guys were loons at my school. I learned of McNair from my advisor - he said its free money. I asked Why Do I need to do this for? He was like research. I was like ok I will try it. This is absolutely fun to research and travel to conferences. This is a great opportunity. I was accepted and did it at Bellview College. GRE was the main focus of the seminars. It was fun I learned a whole lot in a
year. I needed to improve in myself. I learned that I get my Master’s first then PhD. I was like I can do this. – Joseph

Participating in McNair was fun. I met my best friend there (we are still friends to this day). You learn a lot about applying to graduate school – I remember the retreat from 8am until 7pm we talked about funding, networking and it was so annoying but I remember all the information. It was helpful. Then doing the research project for the summer – they would force you to do annotations – I remember coming into graduate school and a lot of students did not know how to do annotations. We did a full fledge research paper in the end. I did McNair one year and SROP the next year. –Charles

I did McNair at Carrington University and SROP at Waterview University. My friend Tiffany participated in McNair and that is how I learned about it. Tiffany told me that McNair was a summer research program and a great opportunity for being prepared for graduate school. I applied and got in. We prepared for the GRE, personal statements, and research process from start to finish. Showed me I can be academic entrepreneur – research what I want or teach what I wanted to and infuse with my passion to travel. Graduate school is bigger than me – I realized that I could be giving back by standing in front of classroom as Black male. Being in Business – I didn’t experience any Black faculty members as an undergraduate. McNair showed me I can do these things and be one of the few Black faculty in Business. -Eddie

Stanley: I learned about McNair through my participation in the black male organization I was a part of. I really learned what research was about. Jumpstarted my research career in undergraduate. It taught me the fundamentals of research and how to apply to graduate school – it paired me with a mentor. Outside of research it talked about grad school, scholarships, funding, everything you needed to know about graduate school. Gave me the opportunity to do my own research project – network and communicate with other professors. McNair had annual workshops, talked about research writing, CV, grant proposals. Something they couldn’t provide – they would recommend a place that could. If I needed a psychology mentor – they suggested one. They always had someone we could go to. Even outside of research – they would pay someone to tutor us for GRE prep. They focused on every aspect – from current situation to path to graduate school. The program staff was always very helpful to me and even helped me with my National Science Foundation (NSF) application – I later got the NSF award. I owe a lot of this success to my participation in McNair. Had I not participated in McNair I would not have even known that graduate school was a possibility.

These four narratives confirm the research that participation undergraduate research is not only important for African American males; but also places them on the direct pathway towards graduate study. I share in their narratives, had it not been for the training I received during SROP I would not be in graduate school – I would not even have known what graduate school was. I do
not want to overlook the participation of Christopher and Mike in other programs that laid a foundation for their graduate study.

My participation in the Williams research program gave me a full ride and scholarship. I was paired with a business marketing scholar to learn the outings of research in the academic world. That was transformative – they gave me the out to not have to work a student campus job. –Christopher

I fell in love with Carrington during my research experience. It was through a summer research program for science students. I had access to the equipment; if I needed something that cost $5000 - my professor said just buy it. At Samson State you always pinching pennies - I never experienced having access to money and equipment. Having participation in this program really opened up the door for me to want to apply for graduate school at Carrington University. I applied and got accepted! – Mike

The data is clear and confirms the research – participation in undergraduate research programs is a direct pathway toward enrollment in graduate study. Not only do you conduct research but you develop a mentoring relationship with faculty; and in many cases – long lasting.

**Earliest Memory and Epiphany Moments of Doctoral Study**

This final subsection discusses both the earliest and epiphany moments my participants thought about doctoral study. Clark et al. (1994) suggests that many minority students believe that admission to graduate schools is next to impossible, as all graduate programs require the GRE as a primary admissions criteria. Another misconception on the part of many minority students relates to financing graduate study: They believe that there is no financial assistance for them, and therefore, they must find employment immediately after the bachelor’s degree to earn enough money for graduate school. Many do not know that, in many cases, a graduate teaching or research assistantship pays for tuition and provides a modest stipend (p. 302). As we discussed previous, participation in undergraduate research programs is a vital function as many of these misconceptions are covered during those times. In regards to the GRE, a report from the Educational Testing Service (2007) shows that only 2 percent of all GRE test takers in 2005 and
2006 were Black males. Harper (2009) notes, “This could signify that Black men are not engaged in experiences that compete them to even think about preparing themselves for educational opportunities beyond the baccalaureate (p. 140).

I benefited from a mentoring program created by this Black woman on campus. We would mentor Black youth in the community and do programming for them on campus. I really like to give back to my community. She is the biggest reason why I choose graduate school as an option (in addition to participating in McNair – she was like you can do all these cool things and have some freedom and research; and use graduate school as a platform for academic excellence which is like the Black studies ethos moniker. She encouraged me and still encourages me through the graduate study process today. – Charles

For Charles – the connection of pursuing graduate study and its importance to helping his community is vital. McCallum et al. (2012) exclaim “For Black students, the decision to enter graduate school is often connected to a mission of racial and community commitment. By educating themselves, Black students believe they can gain the knowledge and abilities to help other Black students pursuing higher education (p. 107).

The thought of enrolling in graduate school was planted in my head after my sophomore year of college when I was a McNair Scholar. Prior to participation, I knew nothing about the program. It really shaped my mind as a Black male – I realized that this (research and action) is bigger than me. After SROP is when I realized that graduate school was a real possibility. I enjoyed doing research in both programs. I understood what service meant for faculty and more importantly, that publishing was king. I enjoy teaching – the fact that I can shape the minds of others. All of this put me on the path towards the PhD. – Eddie

I realized the PhD was for me my sophomore year. Sophomore year – I got more involved in the research with my professor who was my mentor I liked his lifestyle. As a professor of business – he was forthright about his salary and places of travel; he can decide what he wanted to do. When he wanted to work – he did. That is the beauty of the professoriate. I learned once you get Tenure – you can do whatever. – Christopher

When I was doing my summer research program at Carrington University. When it was over I did not want to leave I wanted to stay. I was doing simulations and got published. I fell in love here and I was determined. My advisor and the endless resources were amazing. My resources at Samson State would never equate to what I got at Carrington. I
was exposed to huge labs. I fell in love with labs here. At that time I didn’t need friends I
cared about how nice my lab was. I had access to research funding. I knew I was coming
to Carrington for graduate school. – Mike

I wasn’t familiar with where to get graduate school information. I did not even know
programs like McNair existed. Coming into college – I figured once I earned my
Bachelor’s degree I was done – great job and I will be ballin’. That is exactly how a lot
of children perceive college – that was the end mark. After I participated in McNair I
understood that graduate school was a real possibility for me. – Stanley

I needed to know my next plan so I applied to graduate schools trying to see if I can
network and make things work. I figure I can get my masters in Health Education – it
would look good that I have a masters then apply to medical school. That summer, I met
two students that were graduate students in the program I was interested in. They took me
under their wing. They helped me apply and answered a lot of questions. Fortunately, I
was able to talk to some people and meet some folks. – Thomas

After McNair I knew graduate school was a real possibility. Honestly, I do not think I
would have gone to graduate school had it not been for McNair – it would have been a
much more challenging process. Also, my mom earned her PhD in Anthropology when I
a child. She pushed (well forced) it down my throat. Out of her kids… (My siblings) I am
the only one who has a college degree and the only one going to graduate school. She
was so busy writing and researching. And she was this wonderful professor – that was
really inspirational growing up. – Joseph

My fourth year – conversations between me and the provost began to gain traction. My
mentors would tell me that “you are going to graduate school whether you realize it or
not.” I knew I was ready. I wanted to go to graduate school more and more. – John

My father was heavily involved in politics and he was grooming us to go into politics.
My oldest sister kept saying she likes history – (as examples) this politicians is a doctor
in history. Then we would say “what” he would respond “what nonsense are you
talking”. And he would say yea – you do not have to get a doctorate in medicine. He said
look at our Prime Minister – he has a PhD. Then he started pointing out everyone else
that has a PhD and we realized hey we can get a PhD in anything. I was like 12 or 13. – Daniel

What is so important to point to observe in all of these narratives is the growth that encountered
for my participants. In reflecting back in the earlier themes – many of them were lost and had
given up on the on school; or was successfully academically but faced many other barriers. In
these narratives – you see my participants became young professional men. And furthermore, all
of them by the end of their undergraduate gained both social and cultural capital which played a
direct role in their enrollment in graduate study. It is also important to note that these participants were all socially integrated in their college landscape as Tinto points suggests as strong motivators for persistence. The final theme of my work: The Models of Success of 10 African American Male Doctoral Students discusses my participants and their future.

**Theme 5: The Models of Success of 10 African American Male Doctoral Students**

For students than ultimately earn the PhD – the financial rewards can be substantial. Since the 1970s, earnings of highly successful professionals have increased dramatically (Bowen et al., 1998, p. 92). Bowen et al. (1998) found in a 1990 study that African Americans who entered four-year colleges aspired to earn an advanced degree of some kind (p. 94). As we discussed earlier, regardless of educational attainment – African American males still face barriers. However, earning the PhD provides a level of social mobility, opportunity, and access that is undeniable. Bowen et al. (1998) explain “The acquisition of impressive professional credentials is one method of countering, at least in part, both stereotyping discrimination” (p. 94).

According to Blackwell (1991), when universities fail to recruit large numbers of black for graduate study it results in fewer blacks available for college and teaching positions (p. 261). As the data has shown – having Black faculty on campus is vital towards African American male’s persistence to doctoral study. Blackwell (1991) assets that during the 1970-80 decade, the most powerful predictor of success of blacks continuing on to graduate education was the presence of black faculty (p. 260). Harper (2014) argues that it is important for research begin telling the stories of Black success (p. B14). He further adds, “We never hear about their success and the enablers of their success (p. B14). Harper (2014) extends, “he can count on one hand the number of people who stopped and asked him about his journey to success. It’s easier to
download data and lean on statistics. However, it takes time to seek out successful blacks and spend time doing a turn-by-turn deeply textured analysis of their trajectory (p. B.14).

Harper sums up the need for this research eloquently. This research has shown the educational pathways of a group of ten successful African American males and their pathways towards the doctorate. Earlier, we discussed the lack of black male faculty on college campuses. 100 percent of my participants have plans on pursuing the professoriate after earning their PhDs. I now present to you the next generation of scholars in the academy and their plans towards after the PhD.

Currently, applying for jobs at research extensive universities so I want to be a professor. I think there are two things I want to do – transformative research scholarship that respects local histories especially in urban contexts of indigenous peoples and also have some after school mentoring program that works with black, Latino and native students – learning history through hip hop culture and their unique histories – this would allow me to work with others. Continue mentoring and bring them to campus. I hope I can inspire the next generation of minority youth just like my mentors inspired me. – Charles

Charles is within weeks of earning his Doctor of Philosophy in History at Carrington University. Since the start of data collection – Charles was anxiously applying for professor positions at research extensive universities across the country. What is so interesting to observe about Charles is that he wants to be out in the community helping others through mentorship. This confirms the earlier discussions that African American students see the PhD as a way for social justice and help their communities. There is no doubt that Charles will make a positive impact through teaching, research and mentoring.

Go into faculty as a professor. I have to go back to my Island for two years. I am going there to change the whole idea of math education. We need to shift the whole thing about problem solving into earlier education. There is a big need for me. A lot of free jobs. But because of what I am seeing in the USA – I think I would most likely come back to USA. – Daniel
Daniel is currently at the PhD Candidate stage in Mathematics Education at Carrington University. Daniel brought such deep experiences to the research especially when discussing his first few weeks on campus and the experiences he faced as an African American male. With his background in mathematics and training in education – Daniel wants to come back to the United States after his required Fulbright residency in his home island. He mentioned that he specifically wants to work with underrepresented communities and increase math awareness and comfort with the subject.

Straight to the classroom. I want to be professor. I enjoy interacting with students and just being able to be in the classroom. I also want to serve as a mentor to others. I hope to work at a College of Business somewhere in the United States. I am fine with any level of research institution (i.e. research 1 or research 2). If I went to R2 that didn’t have a sense for international business or study abroad I would enjoy helping to facilitate that – that is my way of giving back. If I went to an HBCU that doesn’t have research going on - I don’t mind. Everything has fallen in place for me and I will go wherever I am needed. – Eddie

Eddie is at the PhD Candidate stage in Business. What is so wonderful about Eddie is that the story that he brought to the research. One would look at Eddie and assume that he had an easy journey to the PhD but like all of my participants – he encountered several barriers along the way. Upon finishing graduate school – there is no doubt that Eddie will be offered a professor position and continue his love for international travel.

I want to be the leading expert in my field – leading to the professoriate. I may do a post-doc. I would like to be down South closer to my girlfriend. There is a high level of Africans there. I want to research and teach part time. Maybe get a grant to focus on my research as well. I am still trying to figure things out. – Thomas

Thomas is at the PhD Candidate stage in Health Education. His story began with him wanting to be a doctor – as his father is a medical doctor. Thus, his upbringing and early educational experiences was also about being a doctor. Thomas later found his true passion which was through Health Education research.
Faculty. Hopefully in a major urban city so that I can thrive. Or second option is an HBCU. I want to be able to help out the next me. – Joseph

Joseph is a third year PhD student in Education. Like Christopher and Eddie, Joseph had the social and cultural capital from an early age as his mother given that his mother holds a PhD in Anthropology and was a college professor. The importance of education beyond the undergraduate was expected of him. Joseph is already making strides towards being a college professor and the training that he has will make him highly competitive in the years to come.

I want to earn and invest money and make a million dollars. Open a rec center for student athletes. Too many times in high school you are really good in sports you can get into college in my hometown. I really want to focus on student’s athletic – athletic skill sets. I also want to work at Samson State University as professor (at some point) but for now I really want to invest in a rec center for the community. – Mike

Mike is a third year PhD student in Material Engineering. What I appreciate about Mike is the honest yet candid experiences he shared during his academic journey. Mike has experienced barriers, discrimination, and racism – and this was all during his year at a private PWI. Mike is a science and math genius – even I observe him and wish I was that good. After earning his PhD – Mike wants to open a community rec center; like Charles – to give back to his community. Later, he wants to become a professor at his undergraduate HBCU in Engineering but his true passion is giving back to his community.

I have a 12 year plan: It would be great if I could leave graduate education and go to a tenure track position at a Research extensive University. I can then navigate the administrative levels after getting full professorship – going from assistant to associate to full; then Dean; Provost; then President. That is really a narrow goal – life has already told me that when I am that specific it may not happen I am ok with that. That path may (also) not be the fit right – like applying to PhD programs – it may not be the place I want to spend six or seven years. – Christopher

One could argue that Christopher’s life was already planned out for him. It was almost expected that he would be successful on so many different levels given his parents background.
Christopher already had both the social and cultural capital from an early age and as he got older – that capital was cumulated to allow him even more access and opportunity. Christopher is finishing up his first year of doctoral work in Business. He aims high – he wants to be the President of a college campus one day while first being a professor. Observing Christopher – there is no doubt it will make it to the top.

I recognized that the black community needs as many black leaders as possible. I have always been an activist and always recognized – the power of activists in the black community – their power would be more if they had a PhD. It does show that you’re re the expert in the field. A lot of the problems in the black community stem from education so I really want to become an expert in that field. Not just for me to say I have a PhD but so I can understand the problems to a greater extent and have that weight behind my name so when I do speak about sensitive issues in the black community – my voice – that is a collaborate effort. I plan on living my life as an activist. I could not imagine living my life any other way. There is so much work that needs to be done. It is too early to tell; but maybe a professor – but activism is my true passion. – John

John is finishing up his first year of doctoral study in Education. John had a rough transition in high school and during our discussion of those years was visibly sad. However, he came to live when discussing his undergraduate and graduate experiences. John’s passion is about being a social activist and helping his community. He would not mind being a professor but he wants to help his community the most. John is already laying that foundation now early in his graduate career and it would be great to see the outcome later on.

I want the ability to do the Professor thing as well as maintain a role in Higher Education. I want to work on this aspect. I am the beginning process. I feel like it will be many opportunities but too early to tell now. – Jason

The “Academic Athlete” – Jason brought excellent imagery to the study. Jason is a first year doctoral student in education. Of all the participants – Jason did not necessarily experience extreme barriers; outside of being too social during undergraduate and loosing focus for a few semester that impacted his GPA. What is so amazing about this fact is that – looking at Jason,
society may cast him as ‘another black guy who may be up to no good.’” Jason is anything but that and it will be great to hear what happens in the years to come.

Too soon to tell – but I see myself in teaching and doing research. I also want to do Mentorship programs in academic settings tailored to find people of color and pushing them toward the graduate degree. I have passion about education – I see the lifelong importance of it. – Stanley

Stanley is finishing up his first year of doctoral study in Psychology. His true passion is to earn his PhD and put it to use in his community through mentorship. He sees the importance of graduate degrees and wants other’s to follow in his footsteps. Stanley brought a different perspective to the research on what it means to be “African American male” when you do not grow up with that culture specifically. He looked for avenues to learn about his culture both in high school and college – and being a part of an undergraduate organization inspired him to apply to McNair; which later provided access to graduate school. As a National Science Fellow (NSF) Stanley will have many more opportunities in his bright future.

The common thread among all of my participants is that they eventually want to pursue the professoriate; but acknowledge that working with their communities through social justice, activism, leadership, and mentoring is important. All of my participants shared beautiful stories of their educational journey from the early memories they had (which for all was elementary school) through their enrollment and initial experiences in graduate school.

The research covered nearly 15 years of the participant’s academic life. In reflecting back on the educational pipeline – the meat of those early experiences centered around 4th and 5th grade – where the data shows the participants began to encounter academic barriers. By high school – the data shows that the participants either were on two tracks: college placement or non-college placement; and in either track they experienced success or academic and social barriers combined. Through undergraduate – the participants all received social and cultural capital as a
result of their integration into the undergraduate landscape which confirms Tinto’s argument of persistence. And finally, on the pathway toward enrollment in graduate study – the participant’s journey to the PhD was inspired by their influences from undergraduate; for example, mentors, professors, and participation in undergraduate research programs. The final chapter of this study wraps up the research and discusses the implications for policy; recommendations; and future research.
CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This study examines the enrollment of African American males into doctoral programs. The data presents models of success of the African American male participants – demonstrating their academic pathways through the educational pipeline from early schooling through enrollment in doctoral programs. Chapter 1 introduces the topic for examination as presents the gap in the literature: lack of research on African American males and their enrollment in doctoral programs. The chapter also presents the conceptual framework – Tinto’s theory of social integration into the academic landscape which hypothesized promotes persistence into advanced study. As well as the influence of social and cultural capital for African American males.

Chapter 2 presents an analysis of the literature found on African American males and their persistence through the educational pipeline. Chapter 3 presents the qualitative methodology for which the study follows. Chapter 4 introduces the ten participants that voluntary agreed to participate in the study. Chapter 5 presents the data found and broken up into five major themes for analysis with the most consistent patterns analyzed. Finally, Chapter 6 presents a discussion of the results, implications for future research, recommendations, and conclusions.

The pathways to the PhD for these 10 African American male participants was not an easy one. Each person experienced trials and tribulations along their journey. What is most interested to note is the most troubled time in schooling is elementary school and high school. When African American males do not have access to AP classes and are shut out from opportunities for scholastic development – it hinders their abilities to progress along the pathway. What is admiral about all 10 of these young men is that while each experienced a “leakage point” – they did not allow that to throw them off task. Each participant picked up the
pieces and moved on. Furthermore, the participants illustrate various different experiences in high school that really shows a great representation of the experience of being African American male in the education system of the United States.

The participants each had access to mentors, family members, parents, teachers, friends, and even that were not even Black were helpful. Having excellent social capital experiences during K-12 education laid a wonderful foundation for many of the participants. So many times in speaking with African American youth and those in college – you hear “I was in the wrong place at the wrong time.” Many times when you hear this – it’s related to negative experiences. For example, Mike’s discussion of almost getting in trouble while hanging with his friends in college. I challenge the next generation of African American males to no longer way “I was in the wrong place at the wrong time” and instead usher in a new saying “I was in the right place at the right time.” Nearly participant highlighted this notion of being in the right place at the right time – Stanley’s experience of attending a PWI but not knowing anything about McNair until an administrator came to his organization meeting and gave a presentation. The experiences speak volumes toward creating opportunity and providing access to African American males in every level of their schooling.

Participation in the Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP), Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program, as well as many other research opportunities – illustrate the need for these type of programs to be in higher education institutions. Case in point, McNair due to its funding coming from the federal government is often challenged as being cut from the budget. Far too few African American males participate in these programs. The arguments are many – “I did not know about it,” “No one told me about it,” “I did not meet the GPA requirements.” A common argument from the participants was that administrators on campus did not do enough for them to
learn about these opportunities early enough in their undergraduate careers. I call to action for administrators of SROP and McNair nationwide to be vocal and present during welcome back week during the first week of school during the fall semester. Other campus units promote their opportunities – there is no reason why the same should not be for research programs. While freshman can rarely apply – at least learning about the program is a first step. It is even important to have underrepresented graduate students run the table or booths. This can truly inspire an African American male – new to campus. Not only can he see the next four or five years but you have the bug in his ear about the possibility of earning a PhD. Imagine that phone call to his parents or partner “I went to the resource fair and I have decided I am going to pursue a PhD.” Wow – that is a very deeply profound statement that is enlightening. It can happen!

The participants spoke of their experiences within their graduate programs and while the majority were amazing narratives – there were a few that is problematic. I call to action that Graduate Deans or Directors of Graduate Study must promote the issues of diversity but specifically access and participation of African American males in their respective programs. While the research does not cover the experiences of African American males in graduate study – the conversations from the participants say enough. Those from STEM fields remain an object by other graduate students and even faculty. No graduate student should feel unwanted or as if their academic credentials are being questioned. The next section discusses some of these topics in more depth following the presentation of the research questions.

Discussion of Findings

The following sections presents the research questions and a discussion of the data uncovered.
Research Question 1:

What factors do African American male doctoral students identify as barriers to success throughout the educational pipeline (Secondary, Post-Secondary, and Graduate Study)?

One of the most vital pieces of data collected from the study is the impact that those in positions of power have on African American males. For example, at the elementary and secondary level – half of my participants faced barriers from teachers and administrators that did not listen to their faces and instead placed them on paths that did not lead to a college track. John’s story of enrolling in high school and the guidance counselor telling him that he could not take AP classes; even though his academic record proved he could be successful. Joseph attending a rural high school where AP classes were offered but he was placed on an academic track that did not make those course possible. In both cases – neither enrolled in AP classes during high school. This confirms the literature by Oakes and other scholars that argue that teachers are the gatekeepers and can limit access to students of color in academic programs; and further, non-participation on a college track can result in not having access to AP coursework.

At both and the undergraduate and graduate level – participants reported increased encounters with police figures – not because they were doing something – but simply because they were “black.” Daniel, Charles, and Thomas’ narratives about being pulled over for simply “driving white black,” are powerful stories about the experiences of African American males in society and their connection to the police. In all three cases – the police made a similar statement “you look like someone that fit a description,” that is the common explanation nearly every African American male I have spoken to in generally makes when dealing with the police. Even more so, being an academic scholar at a prestigious PWI such as Carrington University brings forth a set of stereotypes and barriers that universities must take note of. Daniel’s experience as a
first semester graduate student at Carrington is the most troubling. Administrators and faculty treated him so poorly due to his race that he considered leaving. These experiences are also confirmed by Eddie and Charles. It shows that African American males indeed do encounter a hostile environment upon coming to a PWI.

Jason, Eddie, and Thomas began their undergraduate careers with the intention of pursuing STEM majors – Thomas wanted to be a medical doctor. However, because of the power of weed out and not receiving the type of support needed to persist in that curriculum – they ended up changing their majors. All three report though – they were happy with their graduating major and that placed them on a pathway towards enrollment in doctoral study. I am proud to report that both Mike and Daniel both are in the STEM fields and maintained that trajectory from an early age. As both mentions – they were taught the importance of math and science from an early age and their love of the subject remained for the rest of their academic careers. It is also important to observe that both were influenced by social capital of their parents or guardians – Daniel because his father encouraged him to be the “human calculator” at his store; and Mike given that his grandmother taught him timetables at the age of 8. Perhaps there are many other African American males who are interested in STEM fields at early ages but as the literature and data point out – they face barriers as they matriculate through the educational pipeline.

Research Question 2:

What factors do African American male doctoral students identify as positive motivators throughout the educational pipeline (Secondary, Post-Secondary, and Graduate Study)?
The positive motivators throughout the educational pipeline for the participants are truly instrumental to each story. What I find most interesting is that many of the early positive motivators my participants came from non-African American teachers and mentors. The literature varies but as stated in chapter 2 – it is thought that for African American males to be successful – they need strong African American male role models. However, in the case of Charles, Mike, and Jason – their positive influences were not black and had significantly important influences on them. For example, Charles was so inspired by his teacher for giving him a book on Malcolm X – which he enrolled at Rock Point University which was the same institution his teacher graduated from. Mike was able to “nerd” out with a teacher at his school and talk about science and the latest science related TV shows. Mike confirms Majors (1992) discussion of Cool Pose where Mike was able to be chameleon-like and interchange between being the “nerd” with his teacher and the “thug engineer” with his friends.

The power of mentorship is threaded throughout the data. For every participant – they can contribute their enrollment in doctoral programs to a mentor they had. The power of mentorship should not be taken lightly – it takes influence of those who have made it to inspire the next generation. John eloquently says this “I want to inspire the next me.” In that simple statement – he wants to use this PhD to help other African American males see that education is vital and that graduate school is a possibility. For John – developing a close relationship with both the Director of the Multicultural Center and the Provost of the University opened up immense opportunities for international travel and provided a pathway toward enrollment in graduate study. These type of experiences are further confirmed by every other participant in the study as well.
The need for more underrepresented faculty on college campuses is urgent. However, as the research shows – in order for that need to occur; we need more underrepresented students in graduate school. Over half of the participants reported that during their undergraduate – they did not encounter a significant number (if any) Black male faculty on their college campuses. For those that do exist – it is important that they mentor undergraduates and inspire the next generation of scholars; especially through mentorship and encouraging participation in undergraduate research programs.

Research Question 3:

What are the institutional and social factors that encourage African American men to pursue Doctoral study?

The participation in undergraduate research programs for African American males is the biggest predictor of enrollment in graduate study. For Eddie, Charles, John, and Stanley – their participation in either SROP or McNair created a direct pathway for their enrollment in graduate school. The significance of these programs should not be taken lightly. However, we live in a society today where programs like these (and other programs that are designed to promote access and matriculation of underrepresented minorities) are being placed on the chopping block. These narratives demonstrate the power of these programs. Furthermore, Mike’s experience participating in both a research program overseas as well as at Carrington University – illustrate the power of being in the “right place at the right time,” – in both circumstances – a black professor invited him to participate. This is further confirmed by Stanley; who by his membership in a Black male organization on campus – was invited to apply for McNair.
Following Tinto’s theory of social integration – the participants experienced various levels of integration in high school. It should be pointed out that not all participants were fully integrated while in high school – both John and Joseph (in addition to not having access to advanced coursework) did not participate in organizations. Both noted – they choose to be as quiet as possible – they just wanted to leave. In contrast, Jason, who termed himself the “Academic Athlete,” along with Thomas, Mike, Charles, and Eddie were all actively involved within the landscape of their high schools and in many cases encouraged their enrollment in undergraduate.

At the undergraduate level – all participants were fully integrated into the college environment by their graduation year. Eddie; however, faced immediate social isolation because administrators on campus did not make him feel welcomed. Thus, he was alone and had a rough first year. He later became an instructor for the First-Year Experience course in his college and that allowed him to improve the first year of his students. The research is confirmed that the importance of FYE programs that discuss getting involved on campus; study skills; time management, etc. are important to the social integration of freshman. Additionally, the need for bridge programs and academic year (supplemental) programs are important for the success of African American males throughout undergraduate.

The data confirms Tinto’s theory of student integration: when students are more actively involved (or engaged) within the landscape of their institutions through encounters with faculty, staff, administrators, peers, and being involved in social organizations – they are more likely to persist. In all cases – the participants followed several of Tinto’s benchmarks for social integration and all report that these provided a direct pathway for them to enroll in doctoral study.
Research Question 4:

What was the epiphany moment African American males realized when they wanted to enroll in a doctoral program? When did participant first learn about graduate study? Are there social capital factors that encouraged choosing to enroll in a doctoral program?

The epiphany moment of realizing that graduate school is an option was mostly reported by participants who participated in undergraduate research programs. Excluding Daniel and John, whose parents ingrained the importance of graduate school in them from a young age – the other participants became inspired to pursue doctoral study through participation in SROP, McNair, or other research programs. That epiphany moment is important because that may be a moment that could inspire other black male undergraduates as well. Both Jason and Thomas did not have the opportunity to participate in an undergraduate research program – but their epiphany moments came from participation in their Greek organizations. Both were inspired by their frat brothers who had already earned their doctorates or were working towards them.

The earliest memories of doctoral study was varied by participants. Again, both Daniel and John were trained early in their thinking about graduate school. For John, because his mom was a graduate student while he was a child and later became a professor – he was well aware of the connecting the pathway of undergraduate to graduate. Charles, on the other hand had a mentor who from a young age discussed the importance of graduate school and that conversation lasted throughout undergraduate. For the other participants – many of their earliest memories were achieved either through the social networks they had or participation in undergraduate research programs.
In speaking of the social networks – I would like to point out the power of these networks during undergraduate. All of my participants were actively involved during their undergraduate and thus, gained social and cultural capital as a result of their involvement. Christopher, Joseph, and Thomas all had social and cultural capital – one or both of their parents attended college. Thomas’ father is a medical doctor (surgeon). For the participants that did not have access to social or cultural capital through their high school years –developed it through their networks during undergraduate which created a direct pathway towards enrollment in doctoral study.

Application of Conceptual Framework

Tinto’s theory of Social Integration was used as a conceptual framework to analyze if indeed African American males are fully integrated into the academic landscape – that will result in their persistence toward graduation and further their participation to earn advanced degrees. As previous mentioned – 100 percent of participants were fully integrated within their undergraduate institutions through several aspects. Participation in Organizations – both ethnic and Greek allowed for participants to build social networks with elder members, faculty, administrators, and peers. These relationships were vital in assisting in matriculation through undergraduate and helped establish a pathway towards graduate enrollment. Second, participants maintained relationships with faculty and administrators on campus which ultimately resulted in a mentoring relationship developing; this relationship then further secured their pathways toward graduate enrollment. Tinto’s theory of social integration is confirmed in my study – the more African American male students are engaged – the more likely they will persist, graduate, and pursue advanced degrees.
While not all my participants had the advantages of both social and cultural capital when they began undergraduate – both forms of capital were developed for all participants throughout their undergraduate careers. Christopher, Joseph, and Thomas all had parents who attended college (and the latter two earning professional degrees). Thus, they brought forth both social and capital throughout their academic journeys. They knew the expectations of college and further; understood from an early age that graduate school was possible because. Charles, Eddie, and Stanley did not have the social capital or cultural capital through high school. However, for all three participants – they gained both forms of capital throughout high school as a result of powerful mentors and teachers. Both Stanley and Mike recall being in the right place at the right time - which are powerful forms of social capital. For Stanley, being at an organization meeting one day during his undergraduate opened up a pathway toward participation in McNair – he mentions that he did not even know these type of programs existed. Mike being personally invited by a black male faculty member to conduct undergraduate research at Carrington University – was just by attending a conference and networking. Social and cultural capital are powerful for African American males. While not all participants initially had these forms of capital early on; they gained them throughout their undergraduate and confirm that relationships, networks, and memberships they developed created a pathway towards enrollment in doctoral study.

Further Critique of Tinto’s Student Integration Model

While I successfully apply Tinto’s model to the study and support its applicability along the academic pipeline to successful African American males; it is important to acknowledge the scholarly critiques of the model. Tinto (1993) observes like their White peers, African American students should fully integrate both socially and academically into their college environments to
persist. Strayhorn (2012) cautions that African Americans have more difficulty integrating academically than they do socially into higher education institutions because they “are more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds and to have experienced inferior schooling prior to college” (Tinto, p. 73). This, African American college students face challenges integrating into their institutions of higher education because of their inability to find other students who mirror their previous experiences (Strayhorn et al., p. 166, 2010).

Furthermore, Tinto’s model has been widely critiqued by scholars for omitting the experiences of minority students in higher education (Braxton et al. 2000; Dennis et al. 2005; Guiffrida, 2005; 2006; Kuh & Love, 2000; McClure, 2006; Nora, 2001). Guiffrida (2006) argues: “One significant cultural limitation of the theory that is well established in higher education literature relates to Tinto’s assertion that students need to “break away” from past associations and traditions to become integrated into the college’s social and academic realms” (p. 451). Strayhorn (2010) continues that critics observe that Tinto’s theory ignores bicultural integration or the ability of minority students to navigate multiple cultural worlds – that of their own and mainstream environments (Strayhorn, p. 166, 2010).

Additionally, many scholars argue that Tinto’s model was designed for White men on predominantly white campuses, and is not applicable to minority students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Kuh and Love, 2000; Guiffrida, 2005). Scholars contend that the model encourages students to deny their cultural traditions and supportive relationships in order to adopt those of the PWI. This approach is problematic for Black students given their history of oppression and racism in America (Moore & Upcraft, 1990; Tierney, 1992) (Scott, p. 63, 2012). These critiques are very important to keep in mind; however, the framework provided an immense opportunity for my participants to explore being included within their institutions; participating in
organizations and research opportunities; as well as gaining relationships through peer; administration; and faculty networks. It is also important to note that the participants did not lose their African American foundation while at their PWI’s. Excluding Mike and Joseph (both graduated from HBCUs where African American history is celebrated); the other eight participants maintained their African American roots at their PWI. And in some cases, they became more Afro-centric as John and Charles illustrated by becoming very active in organizations on campus that promoted being black.

Use of Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a plausible model that could have also been applied to the study. Some may argue CRT may have been the better choice over Tinto’s model. Critical race theorists all agree that race is a central structure in society (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Gillborn, 2005; Yosso, 2006). Zamudio et al. (2011) note “As a society, we like to believe that racism is no longer a salient social problem since it has been illegal for over 50 years. Critical race theorists believe that not only does racial inequality continue to be embedded in the legal system, but that racial inequality permeates every aspect of social life from minute, intimate relationships, to the neighborhoods we live in (inner-cities, barrios, and reservations), and the schools we go to (low achieving vs high achieving), all the way to the macro-economic system (white male domination of ownership of the means of production) (p. 3).

Furthermore, critical race theorists view mainstream education as one of the many institutions that both historically and contemporarily serve to reproduce unequal power relations and academic outcomes. Schools in particular have played a powerful role in creating racial inequality (Zamudio et al., p. 11, 2011). This can be supported through the early narratives of nearly all the participants during their K-12 schooling. However, the stories of John and Joseph
are the most relatable as they both experienced academic barriers in high school that prevented them from participating in AP classes. Mike also experienced early barriers when he had previously been in all gifted courses but due to transferring to another school; was placed in regular classes. In all three cases, the participants relate these barriers to their race.

In a study by Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) – the authors found that African American students attending three elite PWIs experienced more racial microaggressions, which they defined as unconscious and subtle forms of racism. These experiences triggered participants in their study to seek a “positive collegiate racial climate” (p. 70) (Palmer & Young, p. 140, 2010). Tinto (2012) extends “Decisions to stay or leave are shaped, in part, by the meaning students attach to their involvement, the sense that their involvement is valued and that the community with which they interact is supportive of their presence on campus” (p. 66). Tinto (2012) further adds, “This is precisely what Hurtado (1994) and Hurtado and Carter (1997) argue in their analysis of “hostile climates” for minority students. The supportive climate of a campus fosters student’s retention by establishing the broader context within which involvements occur and are interpreted (Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, and Woods, 2009) (p. 66). Daniel’s narrative of his initial reception to the Department of Mathematics at Carrington University illustrate what the aforementioned scholars theme as “hostile environments.” The stories of Eddie, Thomas, Mike, and Charles are supported as well – each experienced racism at their PWI institution as well as society. Recall, as simple as walking down the street and a lady grabbing her purse thinking she was going to get robbed. These microaggressions are real situations that African American males encounter at PWIs and the larger society (community) as well. Thus, CRT as a framework could be applied to look at the racial microaggressions and barriers the participants
faced throughout their schooling. For future research, it would be interesting to use the CRT model applied to successful African American males in doctoral programs.

*Development of Merging Theories*

After completing the study and reflecting on pieces by Tinto (Student Integration Model); Rendón; Baber (critiques of Tinto’s model); Dixson (through the work of Critical Race Theory) as well as aforementioned CRT framework; combined with the work of Yosso (Community Cultural Wealth) – I now see the interlocking relations across all of these models. There are important variables in Tinto’s model as it provides key benchmarks for students to be successfully integrated into the University setting. This is especially true for African American males at PWIs as well as HBCUs. However, Tinto’s model does overemphasize integration and needs to be aware of the conditions that African American males and students of color face at PWIs. Furthermore, PWIs need to be more prepared and understand the needs and expectations of African American males and students of color by providing them with the adequate resources and support. Providing resources such as avenues to experience diversity as well as having supportive faculty and an *inclusive environment* are important factors that result in the success of African American males at PWIs. Through the work of Hurtado; Rendón; Baber et al. – these scholars provide valuable theoretical underpinnings of understanding the success of underrepresented students. Moreover, the evidence of this study points to the existence of strong forms of cultural and social capital that has supported my participants towards earning doctoral degrees. Each of my respondents discuss the importance of social networks, community cultural wealth, as well as family (parental support) as strong indicators of their success. A future model applied to the study, may in fact include pieces of Tinto’s Student Integration Model as well as pieces of Critical Race Theory to develop a mosaic of merging frameworks.
Implications for Policy

Based on the study there are several implications for policy that should be noted. This section focuses specifically on policy that can increase access and participation in doctoral study by African American males. These recommendations should be used by faculty, Deans, and University administrators to develop and secure pathways for African American males to understand that graduate school is a possibility.

1. The data is clear – African American male undergraduate students must participate in undergraduate research experiences. Programs like McNair and SROP are crucial for African American males to help them connect undergraduate to graduate study. Many African American male undergraduates come to college and fail to realize that graduate school is a possibility. Participation in these types of programs assist in the application process; give them knowledge of funding of graduate school; navigation of securing mentors; and developing research proposals. Frierson (1988) notes that the goal of these types of research programs is to, “Give students in-depth research experience, enhance their attitudes towards research, and encourage them to pursue graduate degrees (p. 106). These programs provide an “access point” for underrepresented students to navigate the graduate application process and conduct graduate level research. However, PWI institutions must ensure that African American male students are not only included in the environment but also that the campus is diverse (through undergraduate and graduate enrollment; as well as faculty and administrators).

2. Graduate Deans and Directors of Graduate Study must take an active role in both outreach and recruiting activities. Each year – there are numerous conferences that take place across the United States in nearly every field. Specifically, there are conferences for
African Americans (and other minority groups) in STEM fields. Graduate Deans should hire staff to attend these conferences, set up a booth, and recruit. I have had the opportunity to travel to several conferences both in STEM and the Humanities on a recruiting trip and these students are sponges – they want to talk and learn about graduate school. But if we are not there – then they closes that access point. Clark at al. (1994) notes “graduate deans should understand the centrality of their role in enhancing the minority presence in graduate education and the benefits of that presence to their institution and the country as whole (p. 303). Furthermore, Clark et al. (1994) points out “Much can be learned from campuses that have made the recruitment, retention, and graduation of U.S. minorities an institutional priority. This type of commitment empowers the graduate dean with increased authority and financial support to establish the programs and services required to outreach and promote graduate study within minority communities (p. 307).

3. In regards to increasing STEM access and participation – there are national programs in place to for minority students. MARC (Minority Access to Research Careers) provides students with faculty mentorship, research projects, and access to jobs after graduation. GEM (The National Consortium for Graduate Engineering Degrees for Minorities) has a similar basis- it provides students with faculty mentorship, research, but also provides a graduate stipend valued between $20,000 and $100,000. It is important to note – like most fellowships – both of these opportunities are highly competitive; however, it does provide a reasonable pathway for African American males.

4. It is significantly important for PWIs and HBCUs to participate in these type of recruitment activities. Even as simple as hosting a current minority graduate student
panel in their department and inviting undergraduates. Thomas et al. (1992) found three strategies that should be implemented: Effective recruitment efforts (1) provide funds for departments to recruit minority students, (2) sponsor recruitment conferences, fairs, and summer research opportunities for undergraduates, and (3) participate in exchange programs to obtain the names and information about promising minority candidates. Identification and personal contact with minority students were found to be among the most effective recruitment practices (Adams, 1989; Blackwell, 1983; National Board on Graduate Education, 1976) (Wilson, R. Access Denied: Race, Ethnicity, and the Scientific Enterprise. Edited by Campbell Jr., G., Denes, R., Morrison, C., 2000) (p. 255).

5. At the elementary and secondary level – teachers must not limit access and participation of African American males in academic programs. As the data show – these have harmful effects on students. Strayhorn (2009) explains: “Federal policies must play a role in increasing the participation rates of African American men in graduate school. Federal aid, precollege intervention (i.e. TRIO), and research and development policies should be fashioned to ameliorate the academic and financial barriers that may constrain the graduate school choices of Black men (p. 138).

6. African American males must be able to connect the pathways of each level of schooling as they matriculate through the educational pipeline. It is feasible for to discuss life after undergraduate while in high school during the college application process. Furthermore, once students arrive at undergraduate – graduate departments have a tremendous opportunity to discuss the importance of graduate school especially during welcome back week and welcome freshman activities week. Strayhorn (2009) suggests “Graduate departments should create pipeline programs that provide early support and assistance to
help young Black men navigate their ways to and through graduate school (p. 138). My participants also confirmed some of these earlier pathway suggestions:

Black males should hear about graduate school in grades 11 and 12 – putting the “bug” in their ear. It shows that it is an option to select if they decide to go on to undergraduate. I myself didn’t know about graduate school possibilities until I pursued McNair, but knowing earlier may have better shaped my undergraduate trajectory. - Eddie

I was fortunate because my scholarship put me in direct contact. Most of my peers didn’t really know – people in business that are professors they think they are failed businessman or talking about all their troubles in business. You typically as a business student - you go get a $60,000 job upon graduation. Working up the later but that is not for everybody. I think it can be beneficial for any student – more promotion of that as a career field – do you really want to work for someone else or known as this expert. Get at them early on. – Christopher

While these are recommendations – much of the conversation must start in administrative offices. Graduate Deans, undergraduate administrators, and those that coordinate research programs must take an active role in recruiting talented African American males for graduate study. Far too often, I come across a talented African American male undergraduate on campus – who has all the potential in the world but doubts himself and his abilities. Usually, by his senior year – he is exhausted from school having experienced many of the barriers we have uncovered through this research. It takes a mentor (a current black male graduate student or faculty) to work with that talent and mold and shape him. As several participants mentioned – they do not see life after undergraduate – they think school ends afterwards. They need to understand that going to graduate school is a possibility. And that you can go nearly for free with the assistance of assistantships and fellowships. I hope that the narratives of my participants inspire that next generation of talented African American males.

Future Research

The next goal is to turn this dissertation into a book. Following the framework of Germano, W. (2005) From Dissertation to Book – it would be wonderful to continue this
discussion with another subset of African American male graduate students at a HBCU. The comparative and contrasting discussions between PWIs and HBCUs may be amazing work. The setup of the book would be similar in nature to the work of Elijah Anderson’s *Street Wise* or Reginald Clark’s *Family Life and School Achievement*. While my training is not as an anthropologist – I can appreciate the methodology approach to both of their work through case study analysis. It would also be interesting to do a follow up study in five years on the ten participants to see what they have been up? It would be great to meet up with the participants again to see if they achieved their professional goals or if they encountered any barriers during their final years of graduate study or entering the workforce. It would also be great to evaluate the impact of mentoring on their success and question if they are functioning as mentors themselves? A great follow up study can be achieved following up with the participants in five years as a lot can happen and each participant has so much more to share about their journey.

**Concluding Thoughts**

At the end of the PhD journey, the participants all agree on one thing – earning the PhD is about transforming their communities. These young men want to earn the highest degree and make change at many different levels including mentoring, developing programs, and opening centers. What is even more empowering is that a few want to use their PhD as a framework for activism and change the notion of what it means to be a Black man in America. The overwhelming majority also look forward to applying for tenure track faculty positions at research institutions across the country.

It is in my sincerest hope that this research falls into the hands of another talented African American male from any discipline so that he read the narratives of my participants and be inspired. These voices of my participants are powerful and truly discuss what it means to be an
African American male in the United States. This research not only confirms racial
discrimination and stereotypes that we are all familiar with; but also uncovers some beautiful
stories about the impact of mentors and great experiences students have at both PWIs and
HBBUs.

There is still a lot more work to be done – and while this study covered a vast array of my
participant’s journey through the educational pipeline and concluded that social integration and
access to social and cultural capital provide pathways toward graduate education – African
American males remain an unvoiced population. There are thousands of stories to tell in respect
to African American males in STEM and their pathways which would be a separate research
project in itself. This work highlights African American male’s experiences from a variety of
graduate disciplines.

My participants gave brilliant and honest narratives of their academic experiences as well
as the social barriers they face being African American male. The study illustrates that we are
talented African American males that have withstood barriers that society has placed upon us and
using our experiences for motivation to earn doctoral degrees in our respective programs. It is
my sincerest hope that the narratives of my participants inspire the next generation of African
American males to continue on the pathway toward enrolling in doctoral programs.
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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

December 4, 2013

William Trent
Ed Organization and Leadership
351 Education Bldg
1310 S Sixth St
MC 708

RE: Counterstories of Success: Why African American Males Choose to Enroll in Doctoral Programs
IRB Protocol Number: 13695

EXPIRATION DATE: December 3, 2016

Dear Dr. Trent:

Thank you for submitting the completed IRB application form for your project entitled Counterstories of Success: Why African American Males Choose to Enroll in Doctoral Programs. Your project was assigned Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol Number 13695 and reviewed. It has been determined that the research activities described in this application meet the criteria for exemption at 45CFR46.101(b)(2).

This determination of exemption only applies to the research study as submitted. Please note that additional modifications to your project need to be submitted to the IRB for review and exemption determination or approval before the modifications are initiated.

We appreciate your conscientious adherence to the requirements of human subjects research. If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me or the IRB Office, or visit our website at http://www.irb.illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Dustin L. Youum
Human Subjects Research Exempt Specialist, Institutional Review Board

c: Jamil Johnson
APPENDIX B: Recruitment Email to Subjects

My name is Jamil D. Johnson a PhD candidate in the Department of Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership (EPOL). Thank you for your interest in participating in my dissertation research project titled The Educational Pathways of African American Males and their Enrollment in Doctoral Programs at a Research Extensive Predominantly White Institution.

As an African American male graduate student – I have observed the low enrollment of African American males in graduate programs across the University of Illinois campus. For each of us – there are many factors that encouraged our academic success and motivation to pursue the Doctorate. Some of these factors may include family encouragement, mentors, K-12 education, undergraduate institution, or pivotal life situations. This study seeks your narrative (story) to develop a profile of successful African American males and their educational pathways toward enrolling in Doctoral Programs at a Research Extensive Predominantly White Institution.

Your participation in the study will require four (4) to five (5) weeks of your time. You will initially meet with Jamil D. Johnson (to last no more than 30 minutes) – this will help you understand the project in further detail as well as establish a comfortable relationship. An explanation of your confidentiality and consent agreement form will also be discussed and signed (should you choose to participate). Once signed, you will receive a manila envelope (seal provided) containing a Demographic Information Survey which you may take a full week to complete. At the end of the period, Jamil D. Johnson will contact you to pick up your document in the sealed manila envelope. Within 48 hours, Jamil D. Johnson will contact you to schedule a 90 minute conversational interview. Following interview transcription and write up – a follow up interview will be scheduled (estimated within two (2) weeks of interview) to cover any additional topics or questions that may have been overlooked. Participants will receive a small gift upon completing of the study.

To ensure confidentiality – Jamil D. Johnson will assign you a pseudo name in place of your real name and all handwritten documents, emailed communication, tape recordings, and instruments will be safely secured in a password protected file box, separate from any information that could lead to your real identity, at his home. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without consequence to your relationship with the University of Illinois.

If you would like to participate in this study, please email Jamil D. Johnson or call his mobile phone (information provided to participant).

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois’ Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 (collect calls accepted if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at irb@illinois.edu. If you any other questions, please contact William Trent, PhD (Responsible Principal Investigator) (information provided to participant).
APPENDIX C: Voluntary Consent Form

Two copies of the consent form must be signed by you. Please retain a copy for yourself and I will keep a copy for my records. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois’ Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 (collect calls accepted if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at irb@illinois.edu. If you any other questions, please contact William Trent, PhD (Responsible Principal Investigator) (information provided to participant).

I ______________________________, give my consent to take part in Jamil D. Johnson’s dissertation research titled Counterstories of Success: Why African American Males Choose to Enroll in Doctoral Programs. The educational pipeline for African American males often depicts a dismal K-12 experience faced with high dropout rates and disciplinary issues as well as low enrollment and degrees conferred at four year institutions. There is a reason why you chose to enroll in a Doctoral Program – this study needs your voice (your life story) to illustrate factors that resulted in you wanting to pursue the Doctorate. Mentoring, undergraduate institution, education background, and family encouragement are a few factors this study will examine. I understand that I will be answering questions regarding my own experiences throughout my educational journey.

To ensure confidentiality – Jamil D. Johnson will assign you a pseudo name in place of your real name and all handwritten documents, emailed communication, tape recordings, instruments will be safely secured in a password protected file box, separate from any information that could lead to your real identity, at his home. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without consequence to your relationship with the University of Illinois.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois’ Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 (collect calls accepted if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at irb@illinois.edu. If you any other questions, please contact please contact William Trent, PhD (Responsible Principal Investigator) (information provided to participant).

Thank You

William Trent, PhD
Responsible Principal Investigator
Thank you for consenting to participate in my dissertation study titled Counterstories of Success: Why African American Males Choose to Enroll in Doctoral Programs. The educational pipeline for African American males often depicts a dismal K-12 experience faced with high dropout rates and disciplinary issues as well as low enrollment and degrees conferred at four year institutions. There is a reason why you chose to enroll in a Doctoral Program – this study needs your voice (your life story) to illustrate factors that resulted in you wanting to pursue the Doctorate. Mentoring, undergraduate institution, education background, and family encouragement are a few factors this study will examine.

Instructions

This document consists of two parts: The first part is a demographic information survey with multiple choice and short answer questions. Please use the provided pencil (in envelope) to complete the documents and write clearly and legibly. As a reminder: you will be assigned a pseudo name thus your real name will not be attached to any parts of the study; and you may skip any question or part that you are not comfortable answering.

Please take two weeks to accurately respond to the sections of this document with attention to giving great detail. Please At the end of the two week period – Jamil D. Johnson will contact you via cell phone (or other chosen provided contact information) to pick up your document in the provided manila envelope. Please use the provided tape in the packet to securely seal the envelope upon completion.

If you have any questions while completing this document – please do not hesitate to call me at (information provided to participant) (this is my cell phone and I will be available 7 days a week from 8am until 9pm).

Part I: Demographic Information Survey

Reminder: Please write clearly and legibly using the provided pencil and you may skip any question or part that you are not comfortable answering. If a question does not apply to you – please write N/A.

Respondent Name: _____________________________________

Section I: Demographic Information

1. What is your Racial/Ethnic Background (if mixed race – please specify in other)?
   a. African (please specify): ________________________________
   b. African-American
   c. Afro-Caribbean (please specify): ________________________________
   d. Other (please specify): ________________________________
2. What city and state (or country (and city) if outside the USA) were you born?
___________________________________________________________________________

3. Which of the following best describes the geographic area you grew up? ___ Urban
 ___ Suburban ___ Rural ___ other (please specify) ________________________________

4. What is your current age? _______

5. How many siblings do you have? _______

6. What is your marital status?
   a. Single, never married
   b. Married or domestic partnership
   c. Widowed
   d. Divorced
   e. Separated

7. Family Structure: ___ Two Parents ___ Single Parent (Father) ___ Single Parent (Mother)
   ___ Grandparent(s) ___ Other Relative/Guardian (please specify): __________________

8. How would you characterize your socioeconomic background and/or the way you grew up?
   ___ Poor/Low-Income ___ Working Class ___ Middle Class ___ Wealthy/Affluent

9. Parent’s Marital Status: ___ Married ___ Divorced ___ Separated ___ Never Married
   ___ Widowed

10. Mother’s Educational Attainment: ___ Less Than High School ___ High School
    ___ Some College ___ Baccalaureate Degree (please specify major) _______________
    ___ Graduate Level Degree (please specify highest degree & program):
    ________________________________________________________________________

11. Father’s Educational Attainment: ___ Less Than High School ___ High School
    ___ Some College ___ Baccalaureate Degree (please specify major) _______________
    ___ Graduate Level Degree (please specify highest degree & program):
    _______________________________________________________________________

Section II: Education and Academic Information. Please provide as close to
accurate/detailed information as you can. If a question does not apply – please write N/A.

Elementary and High School Background:
12. Did you participate in any TRIO/Upward Bound Program while in elementary and/or high school? ____ Yes ___ No

13. Name of High School, Year of Graduation (city, state or country):

14. High School GPA (at graduation): _______ on a _____ scale

15. Were you member of the National Honor Society or other academic honors programs while in High School? ___ Yes ___ No
   a. If Yes, please list those:

16. ACT Composite Score: ______

17. SAT Composite Score: ______

18. Did you take any Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses while in HS? ___ Yes ___ No
   a. If yes, please list:

19. While in elementary and or high school did you attend any college recruitment fairs or college tours? ___ Yes ___ No

20. Did your high school guidance counselor properly prepare you for applying to undergraduate institutions? ___ Yes ___ No

21. Did your high school effectively prepare you for the rigor of pursuing an undergraduate education? ___ Yes ___ No

22. Did you earn any scholarships or awards to pay for college? ___ Yes ___ No
Undergraduate Institution Background:

23. Are you the first person in your immediate family to attend college? ___ Yes ___ No

24. Name of Undergraduate Institution, Year of Graduation:
________________________________________________________________________

25. Major(s)/Minor(s), Degree(s) Conferred:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

26. Undergraduate GPA (at graduation): __________

27. If you attended other 2 year colleges or 4 year institutions – please list them below (include years attended).
   a.   ________________________________________________________________
   b.   ________________________________________________________________
   c.   ________________________________________________________________
   d.   ________________________________________________________________

28. List undergraduate Funding such as scholarships or grants you received while in Undergraduate:
   a.   ________________________________________________________________
   b.   ________________________________________________________________
   c.   ________________________________________________________________
   d.   ________________________________________________________________
   e.   ________________________________________________________________

29. While in undergraduate did you attend any Graduate Recruitment Fair sponsored by the Graduate College or other academic department? ___ Yes ___ No

30. Did you participate in the Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP)?
   ___ Yes ___ No
   a. If yes, please list institution your SROP experience was at and year (if participated for two-years please list those):
   ________________________________________________________________
b. Did participation in SROP motivate you to enroll in a doctoral program?  
   ___ Yes ___ No  
c. On a scale of 1 to 10 how well did your SROP experience prepare you for graduate study? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
   Poor Adequate Excellent  
d. On a scale of 1 to 10 how well did your SROP experience prepare you for application to enroll in graduate study? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
   Poor Adequate Excellent  

31. Did you participate in the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program? ___ Yes ___ No  
   a. If yes, please list institution your McNair experience was at and year:  
      ____________________________________________________________________  
   b. Did participation in McNair motivate you to enroll in a doctoral program?  
      ___ Yes ___ No  
c. On a scale of 1 to 10 how well did your McNair experience prepare you for graduate study? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
   Poor Adequate Excellent  
d. On a scale of 1 to 10 how well did your McNair experience prepare you for application to enroll in graduate study? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
   Poor Adequate Excellent  

32. Have you participated in other undergraduate research programs, experiences, or trainee/apprenticeships that provide tools and motivation to enrolling in graduate study? ___ Yes (list below) ___ No  
   a. ____________________________________________________________________  
   b. ____________________________________________________________________  
   c. ____________________________________________________________________  
   d. ____________________________________________________________________  
   e. ____________________________________________________________________  

33. On a scale of 1 to 10 how knowledgeable were you about the application process for graduate school? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
   Not Very Adequate Very Knowledgeable  

34. On a scale of 1 to 10 how knowledgeable were you about funding opportunities for graduate school? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
   Not Very Adequate Very Knowledgeable  

35. On a scale of 1 to 10 how knowledgeable were you about the rigor of being a graduate study and the time commitment? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  

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36. Are you a member of a Greek lettered organization? ___ Yes ___ No
   a. If yes, specify: ______________________________________
   b. Did your membership in the organization influence your decision to enroll in graduate study? ___ Yes ___ No

37. Did undergraduate loan debt impact your decision to enroll in graduate study? ___ Yes ___ No

38. What is the earliest memory you have about graduate school (i.e. 5th grade)? __________
   a. What triggered this memory?
      ____________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________

39. Have you had any significant life (celebration and losses) experiences that have encouraged you to be a successful African American male (i.e. loss of a parent, full ride to graduate school)? ___ Yes ___ No
   a. If Yes, briefly explain those:
      ____________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________

Section III: Graduate Background

40. GRE Score: _______ If you took another graduate entrance exam please list exam and score: _______________________________

41. Master’s Institution (city and state/country), Program, and Concentration:
__________________________________________________________

42. Did you participate in the Summer Pre-Doctoral Institute (SPI) on the University of Illinois campus? ___ Yes ___ No

What is your current level of PhD study?
   a. First Year
b. Second Year
c. Third Year
d. All but Dissertation (ABD stage)
e. Earned PhD

43. Graduate Program, College, and Concentration:
________________________________________________________________________

44. Anticipated year of PhD Graduation: _______________

45. Please list graduate school funding (fellowships, assistantships, etc.) you received upon graduate acceptance?
   a. __________________________________________________________
   b. __________________________________________________________
   c. __________________________________________________________
   d. __________________________________________________________
   e. __________________________________________________________
   f. __________________________________________________________

46. What are your plans after you earn the PhD?
   a. Faculty (Teaching and Research at Institution)
   b. Research Position
   c. Industry
   d. Corporate America
   e. Other (please specify): _______________________________________

47. Based on your estimation (observation) – What are the percentages of African American males on the University of Illinois campus?
   a. _____% African American male undergraduates
   b. _____% African American male graduate students
      i. _____% African American male graduate students in your department
   c. _____% African American male Faculty (campus wide)

48. What academic grade (any level from K-12, undergraduate, post undergraduate) do you think African American males need to hear the importance of graduate school and why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
What barriers (if any) have you encountered throughout your educational schooling (i.e. academic, climate, racial, social, etc.)? Briefly explain

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Section IV: Mentorship

49. Did/Do you have an African American male role model? ___ Yes ___ No
   a. If yes, briefly describe how this person serves as an influence on your life (please do not list names):
      _______________________________________________________________________
      _______________________________________________________________________
      _______________________________________________________________________

   b. Did this person influence your decision to enroll in graduate study? ___ Yes ___ No

50. Do you currently have a mentor on the University of Illinois campus? ___ Yes ___ No
   a. If yes, please note your mentor race and gender; and briefly describe how this person serves as an influence on your personal, academic, and professional life (please do not list names):
      _______________________________________________________________________
      _______________________________________________________________________
      _______________________________________________________________________
      _______________________________________________________________________

51. Do you currently have an African American male undergraduate student as a mentee? ___ Yes ___ No

52. Do you currently have an African American male high school student as a mentee? ___ Yes ___ No

You have reached the end of the Demographic Information Survey.

Thank you for your participation.
Appendix E: Interview Questionnaire

Upon completion of the Demographic Information Survey. The researcher will contact the interviewee to pick up the materials in the provided sealed envelope and will schedule a time for our 90 minute interview. The questions below are possible questions that may be asked to the interviewee in addition to additional questions from the Demographic Information Survey.

Thank you for participating in my dissertation research study. Conversational.

Part I: Introduction

A. Let me begin by asking you to tell me about yourself (your narrative, where you grew up)
B. Tell me about your graduate field and how you became interested in this field.

Part II: Elementary and Secondary Education:

A. Tell me about educational journey through elementary and high school
   a. Advanced Placement courses or Honors courses
   b. Interaction with Guidance Counselor
   c. Participation in TRIO/Upward Bound
   d. Academic Preparation
B. What motivated you to graduate from high school?
C. What motivated you to enroll in undergraduate study?
D. Did your high school adequately prepare you for undergraduate?

Part III: Undergraduate

A. Share with me some highlights during your undergraduate tenure.
B. Tell me about your undergraduate institution and your journey to earning your degree
C. What is your knowledge of the Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) and Ronald E. McNair Program?
   a. Did you participate in either?
   b. If yes, what was your experience like in the program? What type of events and seminars did you participate in?
      a. Did participation in the program(s) inform your decision to enroll in graduate study?
E. What campus resources were made available to you regarding application to graduate study?
   a. Were these resources helpful to you?
   b. What was missing or overloaded?
F. Did your undergraduate preparation adequately prepare you for the rigor of graduate study?
G. What role did your undergraduate institution play in your decision to persist successfully to pursue a PhD?
H. Had you enrolled in a different undergraduate institution – do you think your perception of graduate school would have been different or remained the same?
Part IV: Application to Graduate Study

A. At what point in your life did you realize you wanted to enroll in graduate school?
   a. What factors led to that decision?
   b. How did you reach the decision to pursue a PhD?
   c. At what point did you know a doctorate was right for you?
B. What was your motivation for application to the PhD program?
C. Did a person (or people) significantly influence your interest in pursuing the PhD?
D. What role did your undergraduate institution play in your decision to enroll in your PhD program?
E. What inspired you to enroll in a PhD program?
F. Was the graduate school application process understandable?
G. Did you have any previous knowledge about how to fund graduate study?
H. Did you have any doubts about enrolling in graduate study?
I. What was the epiphany moment you realized that they wanted to enroll in graduate school?
J. When did you first learn about graduate study?
K. Are there social capital factors that encouraged choosing to enroll in a doctoral program?

Part V: Family, Friends, and Mentors

A. Do you have any African American male family members/friends whom have earned a PhD? If so, what motivated them to enroll?
B. How important was education in your household when you were growing up?
C. Do you have any close African American male friends that have enrolled or completed a doctoral degree? If so, what motivated them to enroll?
D. What impact has your mentor had on your decision to enroll in graduate study?
E. Do you currently have any mentees in graduate study or on the pathway to application?

Part VI: Barriers

L. Did you encounter any personal barriers that may have discouraged you application to graduate study?
M. How has your race/ethnicity (and gender) played a role in your educational pursuits?
N. How has your economic status played a role in your educational pursuits?

Part VII: African American Males

A. What barriers do African American males face in society?
B. Why is it important for African American males successfully navigate the pathways of elementary – secondary- undergraduate – graduate study?
   a. General
   b. Your specific graduate program
C. What barriers discourage African American males from enrolling in doctoral programs?
D. What role would you say society plays in African American male’s decision to not enroll in doctoral programs?
E. What would you suggest universities do to get increase enrollment of African American males in doctoral programs?
F. If you were recruiting an African American male for graduate study in your department – what would you share (positives and negatives)?
G. What is your perception of African American males who enroll in PhD programs?

Wrap Up:

A. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you for participating in my dissertation research study.
APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

PROFILE: EDDIE

Demographic Information:
Racial/Ethnic Background: African American
Geographic Area from: Urban
Family Structure: Single Parent (Mother)
Socioeconomic Background: Working Class
Mother’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: High School / Real Estate and Home Care Provider
Father’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Less than High School / Security (Deceased)

Elementary and High School Background:
TRIO/Upward Bound Participant: No
National Honor Society Member: No
Advanced Placement (AP) Courses Enrolled: History, Psychology, Physics
Involvement: None.

Undergraduate Institution Background:
Major: Global Issues
Graduating Undergraduate GPA: 3.8 / 4.0
Scholarships Earned: University based scholarship for minority students.
Ronald E. McNair Research Program Participant: Yes
Summer Research Opportunities Program Participant: Yes
Involvement: First Year Experience Program
Major Influences to enroll in Graduate School: Participation in SROP and McNair; Best Friend.
Significant Life Celebrations: N/A
Significant Life Loss: Father passed away before graduating high school – had significant impact on his later academic achievements.
Significant Life Barriers: Social barriers of being African American male.

Graduate Background:
Program: Business
Year: Third Year Doctoral
Funding offered: University based Assistantships
Plans after earning PhD: Professoriate
PROFILE: DANIEL

Demographic Information:
Racial/Ethnic Background: Afro-Caribbean
Geographic Area from: Urban
Family Structure: Two Parents
Socioeconomic Background: Middle Class
Mother’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Some College / Nurse
Father’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Some College / Business Owner

Elementary and High School Background:
TRIO/Upward Bound Participant: No
Graduating High School GPA: 4.0 / 4.0
National Honor Society Member: No
ACT Composite Score: N/A
Advanced Placement (AP) Courses Enrolled: Math, Geography (Honors based on Island)
Involvement: Heavily active within Church and Community.

Undergraduate Institution Background:
Major: Mathematics
Graduating Undergraduate GPA: 4.0 / 4.0
Scholarships Earned: Caribbean Scholastic Achievement Award
Ronald E. McNair Research Program Participant: No
Summer Research Opportunities Program Participant: No
Involvement: Heavily active within Church and Community.
Major Influences to enroll in Graduate School: Parents – specifically father.
Significant Life Celebrations: Earning Fulbright Scholarship.
Significant Life Loss: Father passed away.
Significant Life Barriers: Social barriers of being African American male.

Graduate Background:
Program: Mathematics Education
Year: Third Year Doctoral
Funding offered: University based Assistantships; Fulbright Scholarship to enroll in classes in the United States.
Plans after earning PhD: Professoriate
PROFILE: JOHN

Demographic Information:
Racial/Ethnic Background: Other (Bi-racial: African American and White)
Geographic Area from: Suburban
Family Structure: Single Parent (Father) & Grandparents
Socioeconomic Background: Working Class
Mother’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Some College / N/A
Father’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Some College / Military (Retired)
Grandparents both worked in a factory (Retired)

Elementary and High School Background:
TRIO/Upward Bound Participant: No
Graduating High School GPA: 2.4 / 4.0
National Honor Society Member: No
ACT Composite Score: N/A
Advanced Placement (AP) Courses Enrolled: None.
Involvement: N/A

Undergraduate Institution Background:
Major: Sociology
Graduating Undergraduate GPA: 3.3 / 4.0
Scholarships Earned: University based Scholarship; Higher Education Scholarship
Ronald E. McNair Research Program Participant: No
Summer Research Opportunities Program Participant: No
Involvement: Heavily active within Multicultural Center.
Major Influences to enroll in Graduate School: Faculty and Administrators (Mentors) at Multicultural Center.
Significant Life Celebrations: Gaining scholarships to attend college.
Significant Life Loss: Mother passed away from Cancer in 1st grade; she remains a constant memory and inspiration.
Significant Life Barriers: Social barriers of being African American male.

Graduate Background:
Program: Education
Year: First Year Doctoral
Plans after earning PhD: Professoriate (too early to tell)
PROFILE: JASON

Demographic Information:
Racial/Ethnic Background: African American
Geographic Area from: Urban
Family Structure: Two Parents (Divorced)
Socioeconomic Background: Working Class
Mother’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: High School/Office support at local University
Father’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Some College/Elevator mechanic

Elementary and High School Background:
TRIO/Upward Bound Participant: No
Graduating High School GPA: 3.9 / 4.0
National Honor Society Member: Yes
ACT Composite Score: 23 / 36
Advanced Placement (AP) Courses Enrolled: Calculus, Human Geography
Involvement: Football, Water Polo

Undergraduate Institution Background:
Major: Community Health
Graduating Undergraduate GPA: 3.1 / 4.0
Scholarships Earned: University based scholarship with tuition and fee waiver
Ronald E. McNair Research Program Participant: No
Summer Research Opportunities Program Participant: No
Involvement: National Black Greek Organization; involved with campus Multicultural Center.
Major Influences to enroll in Graduate School: Fraternity Brothers currently enrolled or have earned Doctorates.
Significant Life Celebrations: Joining Black Greek Organization
Significant Life Loss: Parents’ divorce, observing parents struggle in a working class environment, and living in Lake Wood growing up.
Significant Life Barriers: Social barriers of being African American male.

Graduate Background:
Program: Education
Year: First Year Doctoral
Funding offered: University based Assistantship
Plans after earning PhD: Possibly the Professoriate, not sure during study.
PROFILE: STANLEY

Demographic Information:
Racial/Ethnic Background: African American
Geographic Area from: Rural
Family Structure: Single Parent (Mother)
Socioeconomic Background: Middle Class
Mother’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Some College / General Manager in Restaurant Industry
Father’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: High School / N/A

Elementary and High School Background:
TRIO/Upward Bound Participant: Yes
Graduating High School GPA: 3.3 / 4.0
National Honor Society Member: No
ACT Composite Score: 22 / 36
Advanced Placement (AP) Courses Enrolled: None
Involvement: African American Club

Undergraduate Institution Background:
Major: Psychology
Graduating Undergraduate GPA: 3.87 / 4.0
Scholarships Earned: None
Ronald E. McNair Research Program Participant: Yes
Summer Research Opportunities Program Participant: No
Involvement: African American Male Organization
Major Influences to enroll in Graduate School: McNair Participation
Significant Life Celebrations: Awarded National Science Fellowship (NSF)
Significant Life Loss: N/A
Significant Life Barriers: Social barriers of being African American male.

Graduate Background:
Program: Education
Year: First Year Doctoral
Funding offered: University based Assistantship
Plans after earning PhD: Professoriate
PROFILE: THOMAS

Demographic Information:
Racial/Ethnic Background: African American
Geographic Area from: Urban
Family Structure: Two Parents
Socioeconomic Background: Working Class
Mother’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: High School / Nurse
Father’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Doctor of Medicine / Doctor

Elementary and High School Background:
TRIO/Upward Bound Participant: No
Graduating High School GPA: 3.8 / 4.0
National Honor Society Member: Yes
ACT Composite Score: 23 / 36
Advanced Placement (AP) Courses Enrolled: English, History, Biology
Involvement: Basketball

Undergraduate Institution Background:
Major: Community Health
Graduating Undergraduate GPA: 2.8 / 4.0
Scholarships Earned:
Ronald E. McNair Research Program Participant: No
Summer Research Opportunities Program Participant: No
Involvement: National Black Greek Organization; Multicultural Center.
Major Influences to enroll in Graduate School: Fraternity Brothers
Significant Life Celebrations: N/A
Significant Life Loss: N/A
Significant Life Barriers: Social barriers of being African American male.

Graduate Background:
Program: Community Health
Year: Third Year Doctoral
Funding offered: University based Assistantships
Plans after earning PhD: Professoriate and would like to receive a grant to conduct additional research.
PROFILE: CHRISTOPHER

Demographic Information:
Racial/Ethnic Background: African American
Geographic Area from: Rural
Family Structure: Two Parents
Socioeconomic Background: Working Class
Mother’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Baccalaureate (Pharmacy) / Administrative Staff at local University (retired)
Father’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Baccalaureate (Business Management) / Auto Manufacturing Plant (retired)

Elementary and High School Background:
TRIO/Upward Bound Participant: No
Graduating High School GPA: 4.1 / 4.0
National Honor Society Member: Yes
SAT Composite Score: 1800 / 2400
Advanced Placement (AP) Courses Enrolled: Calculus, US History, English, Biology, Spanish
Involvement: Gold Achievement Program

Undergraduate Institution Background:
Major: Business
Graduating Undergraduate GPA: 3.70 / 4.0
Scholarships Earned: Dexter Research Scholarship
Ronald E. McNair Research Program Participant: No
Summer Research Opportunities Program Participant: No
Involvement: National Black Greek Organization
Major Influences to enroll in Graduate School: Faculty and Administrative Mentors during undergraduate; Fraternity Involvement.
Significant Life Celebrations: Earning Black Belt in Karate at young age and winning several world championships; earning full ride to both undergraduate and graduate study.
Significant Life Loss: N/A
Significant Life Barriers: Social barriers of being African American male.

Graduate Background:
Program: Business
Year: First Year Doctoral
Funding offered: University based full ride Fellowship; Business oriented Fellowship
Plans after earning PhD: Professoriate
PROFILE: JOSEPH

Demographic Information:
Racial/Ethnic Background: African American
Geographic Area from: Urban
Family Structure: Single Mother (Mother)
Socioeconomic Background: Middle Class
Mother’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Doctorate (Anthropology) / Professor (Retired)
Father’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Some College / Federal Employee (Deceased)

Elementary and High School Background:
TRIO/Upward Bound Participant: No
Graduating High School GPA: 2.7 / 4.0
National Honor Society Member: No
ACT Composite Score: 18 / 36
Advanced Placement (AP) Courses Enrolled: None
Involvement: Football

Undergraduate Institution Background:
Major: History
Graduating Undergraduate GPA: 2.7 / 4.0
Scholarships Earned: NCAA Football Award
Ronald E. McNair Research Program Participant: Yes
Summer Research Opportunities Program Participant: No
Involvement: National Black Greek Organization, Football
Major Influences to enroll in Graduate School: Participation in McNair; Fraternity Brother; Enrollment at HBCU during undergraduate.

Significant Life Celebrations: N/A
Significant Life Loss: Father passed away at a young age.
Significant Life Barriers: Social barriers of being African American male.

Graduate Background:
Program: Education
Year: First Year Doctoral
Funding offered: University based Assistantships
Plans after earning PhD: Professoriate
PROFILE: MIKE

Demographic Information:
Racial/Ethnic Background: African American
Geographic Area from: Urban
Family Structure: Single Mother (Mother)
Socioeconomic Background: Middle Class
Mother’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Baccalaureate (Biology) / Nurse
Father’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: Some College / N/A

Elementary and High School Background:
TRIO/Upward Bound Participant: No
National Honor Society Member: No
Advanced Placement (AP) Courses Enrolled: Calculus AB, Economics, Biology, Chemistry
Involvement: Basketball
Graduating High School GPA: 3.3 / 4.0
SAT Composite Score: 1830 / 2400

Undergraduate Institution Background:
Major: Electrical Engineering
Graduating Undergraduate GPA: 3.14 / 4.0
Scholarships Earned: MARC STAR Fellowship; American Physical Society Minority Scholarship
Ronald E. McNair Research Program Participant: No
Summer Research Opportunities Program Participant: Yes
Involvement: N/A
Major Influences to enroll in Graduate School: Participation in SROP, Enrollment at HBCU for Undergraduate, Mentors within the Sciences at High School and Undergraduate.
Significant Life Celebrations: N/A
Significant Life Loss: Grandmother who taught him mathematical skills passed away when he was young.
Significant Life Barriers: Social barriers of being African American male.

Graduate Background:
Program: Material Engineering
Year: Second Year Doctoral
Funding offered: University based Assistantships
Plans after earning PhD: Professoriate; but initially Community Involvement – plans to open a Recreation Center in hometown.
PROFILE: CHARLES

Demographic Information:
Racial/Ethnic Background: Other (Black and Saginaw Chippewa) Geographic Area from: Urban
Family Structure: Single Mother (Mother) Socioeconomic Background: Poor/Low-Income
Mother’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: High School / Restaurant Industry Employee
Father’s Educational Attainment/Occupation: High School / N/A

Elementary and High School Background:
TRIO/Upward Bound Participant: Yes Graduating High School GPA: 3.75 / 4.0
National Honor Society Member: Yes ACT Composite Score: 19 / 36
Advanced Placement (AP) Courses Enrolled: US History, Government
Involvement: Baseball, Wilson Achievement Program

Undergraduate Institution Background:
Major: Social Relations and Policy Graduating Undergraduate GPA: 2.9 / 4.0
Scholarships Earned: N/A
Ronald E. McNair Research Program Participant: Yes
Summer Research Opportunities Program Participant: Yes
Involvement: Active in Multicultural Center; Black Student Associations; Community Involvement
Major Influences to enroll in Graduate School: Participation in McNair and SROP; Mentors at Undergraduate Level
Significant Life Celebrations: N/A
Significant Life Loss: N/A
Significant Life Barriers: Social barriers of being African American male.

Graduate Background:
Program: History Year: All But Dissertation (ABD)
Funding offered: University based full ride Fellowship; Assistantships from Department; National Research Fellowships.
Plans after earning PhD: Professoriate; also plans to be actively involved within Community.