BLACK MALE COLLEGIANS CULTIVATING SUCCESS: CRITICAL RACE ASPIRATION ETHOS

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By

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This study explored the principles and parental engagement contributors of Black male collegians success. Success is defined as the continuous enrollment and persistence towards graduating within six years. This study employed a basic qualitative research design along with the theoretical framework of Critical Race Achievement Ideology (CRAI). Data was collected from six Black male collegians who were recent or pending college graduates. Semi-structured interviews and a focus group was conducted to gather narratives and experiences of the Black male collegians cultivating success. Data was analyzed using both emergent and theoretical theme processes through three levels of coding.

The findings revealed that Black male collegians cultivated success through activating a Critical Race Aspiration Ethos (CRAE). CRAE posited expanded CRAI principles specifically possessed by graduating Black male collegians. These principles theorized by CRAE refined success in the Black male success discourse. Additionally, CRAE asserted that parents contribute four major elements to Black male collegians’ success, which cultivates success through the possession of five critical core principles.
The parental engagement elements presented were inconsistent with existing parent involvement and parent engagement literature.

Black male collegians centered their success around their aspirations for their families, communities and the collective Black experience. CRAE suggested that this altruistic ideology of aspiration coupled with an acknowledgment that withstanding and resisting racism were essential components to success. Several recommendations for future research and implications are suggested to enhance Black male success throughout the entire educational journey for multiple entities.

**Keywords:** Black males; Black male collegians; college success; Black parents; parent engagement; critical race achievement ideology; critical race aspiration ethos.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The idea for this dissertation began with a conversation in graduate school during my exit interview from the master’s program. The interviewer asked about some challenges faced while getting my degree. The dialogue led to future goals, one of which was to become a researcher who studies the factors that contribute to the success of Black males. At the time, I did not know much about theories; however, I did know that I wanted my research to focus on Black males who were successful. As the discussion continued, it traveled on a tangential path around personal experiences in graduate school, reflections on developing and coordinating a local Black male mentoring program, and struggles with reading throughout life; and, eventually, I realized how much my parents had contributed to my success.

At the conclusion of the meeting, I recognized that my parents played more of a significant role in determining my success during formative and collegiate educational pursuits than previously realized. Noticeably, fellow successful Black male friends during various debates and discussions identified the type of support that they received from their parents; albeit, many of them did not come from the “traditional family” as I did. My biological mother and father were in my life every step of the way; however, many Black male friends mentioned similar examples of support from a grandparent, uncle, aunt, or another type of extended family member. This realization started my
personal research journey. After graduating with my master’s degree, I began independently researching this topic and became introduced to Ladson-Billings (1994) and Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The knowledge gained shaped the way I began to think about research on Black male college success and the support from their parental figures.

**Researcher Background and Positionality**

In qualitative research, it is important for researchers to be very aware of their positionality and background (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, this section summarizes those contextual aspects. There was an inquisitive young man named Jamal who struggled in school early on; but later excelled despite living in an impoverished inner-city neighborhood and despite having a learning disability. Although Jamal began to excel in school, most of his teachers had never met his parents. For years, the school had pushed Jamal’s parents and peers’ parents to attend parent-teacher conferences and volunteer for field trips. Jamal’s parents were similar to many of his classmates’ parents; they oftentimes worked two jobs and were parents to many children, five in Jamal’s case. Moreover, there was a difference between Jamal’s parents and some of his classmates’ parents. The majority of Jamal’s five siblings eventually graduated from college.

Throughout my life, my parents and family members called me Jamal. What distinguished me from many of my peers while growing up is that most of them did not go to college. Albeit, the few that did were the only one in their family to do so. I have
often questioned: What made my siblings and I more successful with enrolling and persisting in college than many of the other neighborhood youth? What did our parents do differently? Are there things that our parents did that are similar to other successful Black male colleagins’ parents? Answers to these questions is what this researcher sought to understand.

It was during undergraduate years when this researcher became curious about the specific parental practices and methods that most likely contribute to college persistence. I heard the stories of many Black male college friends as we progressed throughout college. We shared stories of similar upbringings and how we made it out of such modest beginnings with few resources. We acknowledged that we somehow defied the odds whereas childhood friends in similar circumstances did not. Over time, this reality led me to ask Black male college friends a few related questions. The assigned readings in my teacher education program contradicted what Black male college friends were saying, which was that their parents were contributors to their success. In fact, the assigned readings painted young Black males as being academically deficient and lacking the necessary parental support to change this fact.

The narrative promoted in my teacher education program concluded that Black parents were uninvolved. Moreover, professors stated that Black and Latino parents were (a) not reading to their sons after school, (b) not assisting with homework, and (c) not volunteering in the school. The prevailing literature suggested that Black males were not
achieving because of a myriad of reasons, with one being a lack of parental involvement. Curiosity led this researcher to question regarding whether or not there were other ways parents could assist in their children’s success. My parents did not regularly do any of those things; however, I knew that they were active in my life and were partly responsible for my being in college. In fact, I questioned whether or not the research we were reading accurately described the situation of Black male college friends and myself. In fact, Black male college friends also characterized experiences with their parents having limited presence within the school. On the contrary, this group of friends and I shared a common set of experiences with a long history of our parents discussing college and future careers early during our childhood. These friends’ parents shared a desire for their sons to have a more fruitful life than they had experienced. These Black male college friends’ stories inspired this dissertation.

**Problem Statement**

Black American youth achievement and school performance remain a pressing issue in education (Graves, 2010; Harper, 2012a; Harper, 2014; Noguera, 2008). The literature and common understanding from a deficit perspective (Coleman, 1988; Harper, 2014; Ogbu & Simon, 1998; Strayhorn, 2008) have framed black male achievement. This deficit perspective affects the attainment of social and cultural capital that affect life experiences and outcomes (Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004). However, contrary to the prevailing literature, there are other structural causes for the disparities in
achievement that create the disconcerting “achievement gap” (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Robinson and Harris (2014) remarked that the achievement gap mistakenly suggests that the cause of the problem has been attributed to the youth and their families. Ladson-Billings (1995) posited that the problem persists due to the design of schools and an ineffective curriculum that resists cultural relevancy.

Many other problems have been identified in the research as contributors to the underperformance of Black male students. These problems include peer group pressures such as “the burden of acting white” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), “stereotype threat” (Steele & Aronson, 1998), and the failure of colleges to cultivate a sense of belonging for underrepresented students (Strayhorn, 2008). The particularity of the problem is the structure of racism in the United States that permeates education and all other facets of society (Bell, 2004). Moreover, this particularity affects Black American experiences in education and family dynamics. McLanahan (2004) highlighted that the literature concludes that there is a dysfunction within Black families that is attributed to the Black academic underperformance. These master narratives ignore the complexities and richness of a group’s cultural life (Montecinos, 1995; Tatum, 1997). Many factors contribute to Black males who do succeed and overcome the odds. However, these factors are widely ignored (Brooks, Jones, & Latten, 2014; Harris & Taylor, 2012; Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, 1998). This dissertation explored parental engagement as a success factor for Black male collegiate achievement.
Epstein (1987) suggested that parent involvement is one of many spheres of influence on young Black American males’ success and school performance. Within the Black community, family structures differ from their White counterparts, including the prevalence of single parent households as well as households that include fictive kin and extended family (Cain & Combs-Orme, 2005; Nguyen, Chatters, & Taylor, 2016). The definition of family and parents varies in many cases by geographic location and between ethnic communities (Aschenbrenner, 1973). Therefore, the familial influences explored for the purposes of this dissertation incorporated a fictive kinship definition of family, seeking to identify persons who serve in the role of parent. Participants were asked to recall and discuss moments when success was promoted by their selected parent. Chapter III explored this method in further detail.

Need for the Study

Some scholars dedicated their research to promoting the success of Black males and families specifically within an educational context (Aschenbrenner, 1973; Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Hrabowski et al., 1998; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Strayhorn, 2012). Most notably, Hrabowski et al. (1998) displayed the resiliency of mothers and fathers who successfully raised academically talented Black males who were interested in science and engineering research. The narratives highlight strong commitments to education and a loving home environment as well as recognizing some of the same pressures noted by Fordham and Ogbu (1986).
Despite a few studies that focus on Black male student success and narratives of parents raising Black males, there is a dearth of literature that focuses on the phenomenon of Black males who are not necessarily high achieving yet persist in college, and which consider the various family structures of the Black family (e.g., extended and fictive family relationships). There is a need to consider the ways that parents view their expectations for their children’s educational process, including college persistence. This dissertation addressed both areas that are gaps within the literature; including, for example, Critical Race Achievement Ideology (Carter, 2008).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to provide counter-narratives to the misframed discourse on Black male college students and their parents in order to fill gaps in the literature. This study focused on Black male narratives on the engagement of their parental figures’ contributions to their college success seen as persistence. The focus was to understand and give voice to the perspectives and experiences of Black families and Black males on college success. This dissertation sought to understand the themes that emerged with particular attention to those linked to racial identity.

Critical Race Achievement Ideology (Carter, 2008), hereafter referred to as CRAI, explores beliefs Black students employ to succeed to combat barriers to success. CRAI couples achievement and race as central components of Black student success. CRAI provides the framing for giving voice to the perspectives of successful Black male
collegians. This researcher sought to examine the relationship of parental engagement and participants’ success. Implications may be drawn from analysis of the themes and the narratives by participants that could be utilized to design success strategies targeted at families, educators, and policymakers to encourage Black male college persistence.

This dissertation focused on the experiences of Black males who persisted in college to graduation and who were not necessarily high achieving. This study examined the experiences solely of Black males who continued college through to graduation. The participants recounted parental engagement strategies from K-12 and college that they perceived to have positively affected their college persistence. Ultimately, this study provides a direct challenge to the prevailing deficit rhetoric that permeates the topic of Black male college student success and Black families.

Guiding Questions

This dissertation drew upon this researcher’s earlier life experiences and Critical Race Theory (hereinafter referred to as CRT) as a basis for better understanding the persistence of Black male college students attending a public, four-year, predominantly white institution (PWI) in the United States Midwest; and the role of their parents in that process. The lived experiences of successful Black males and the influence of their parents were analyzed to counter deficit and marginalizing literature widely associated with this population. CRAI provided ideologies that successful Black male collegians possessed, which framed one level of the analysis.
Parental engagement as a success factor for successful Black male collegians was explored by answering the following questions:

1. What types of parental engagement do Black male collegians attribute to their college success?
2. What is the participant’s perception of the role of race and racism in their own success and their parent(s)’s contribution to it?
3. Which characteristics of traditional parent involvement did the Black male collegians recall their parents performing?

Interview questions were adapted from the guiding questions using an adaptation of Seeberg’s (2013) 20-year study *Black American family engagement and academic success in an affluent school district: Racial class formation in suburbia*; and Carter’s (2008) *Achievement as resistance: The development of a Critical Race Achievement Ideology among Black achievers*.

**Theoretical Framework**

Carter’s (2008) CRAI was selected to further explain and explore the phenomena of Black male achievement. CRAI provided the framework for the purpose and guiding questions as well as the methodology and analysis of findings. The relationship between Black male collegians’ success and their parents’ engagement from the perspective of this theoretical stance was explored. CRAI has proved beneficial for examining the research questions. CRAI is a perspective that explores critical factors that Black students employ
to succeed against all odds and barriers to success. Using this CRAI perspective, achievement and race are interrelated, placing the student at the center of the discussion. CRAI blends the use of critical narrative inquiry and CRT in research as a means of producing scholarship around collectives of Black students focused on their success instead of deficit. CRAI also posits six components held by students as a means of redefining achievement; these components are reviewed in Chapter II.

CRAI centers on Black students’ views of their own success and the factors that contribute to their success. Additionally, it became important to utilize CRAI in the framing because it focuses on the student’s ability to conceptualize race and its salience as well as achievement within a predominantly white space as central characteristics. While CRT focuses on the tenets that the researchers ascribe, CRAI places the participants and their views on the convergences of race and educational achievement at the center. Therefore, the use of CRAI aligns this inquiry with its intended purpose.

The literature review in Chapter II explored the relationship between Black male collegians’ success and parental engagement as it relates to the approach to the study and explicating it further. One of the major critiques of the use of CRT in qualitative studies is that researchers have the tendency to utilize only the first tenet of counter-storytelling (Carter, 2008). Therefore, Carter (2008) explored how to expand beyond CRT for educational issues, but maintain connection with the core of the theory.
This researcher extends beyond CRAI in exploring parental factors in the achievement ideology of Black male collegians. This extension has reconceptualized the ideologies and Black male success theory by acknowledging the role of parents in that success.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this dissertation lies not only in the counter-narratives that contrast the misframed discourse on Black male achievement and their parental engagement, but it may enrich the discourse on both Black male student success and related parental engagement strategies. This dissertation may be helpful to educators, researchers, and future parents by providing greater insight into the complexities encountered by Black males persisting in college and the contributions of their parental figures to that persistence. Foundational to the significance of this dissertation is the model used to frame Black male achievement and parental engagement. The Black Education and Parental Engagement Exploration Model shaped the approach (see Figure 1).
Figure 1. Black Education and Parental Engagement Exploration Model
Limitations

Limitations of this dissertation are inherent in the qualitative design; thus, limitations are best considered as delimitations. Self-reported narratives by the participants are by definition subjective delineations of knowledge and events. The participants may desire to see their stories and their parents reflected in the most positive light through the research; therefore, they may withhold or unintentionally discard some information. This researcher mitigated these limitations not only during the semi-formal interview process but also by triangulating interview narratives with focus group discussions.

Definition of Terms

Terms that have specific meanings in this dissertation are briefly defined. The literature review further elaborates and discusses the following terms:

Black is defined as the racial descriptor of the group of people in America of African descent who self-identify as being part of the involuntary immigrant (i.e., chattel slavery) experience (DuBois, 1989; Woodson, 1990; Philogène, 1999).

Black males are defined as males in America of African descent who self-identify as being a part of the involuntary immigrant experience.

College is defined as a four-year accredited predominately White institution (PWI) of higher education in the United States of America.
College success is defined as continual enrollment or persistence at any college from the first year to senior year while on track for graduation; or recent graduates.

Extended family is defined as the family that extends beyond the nuclear unit, where the household unit is multi-generational and includes biological and non-biologically related individuals for extended periods of time (Aschenbrenner, 1973; Diamond, 1999).

Fictive kinship is defined as a family friend considered a relative with all rights and privileges of a biological relative and performs the role of a biological kin (Chatter, Taylor, & Jayakody, 1994; Stewart, Hall, & Bowie, 2007).

Parent or parental figure (these terms are used interchangeably) are defined as the individual selected by the participant who most acted in a role akin to the traditional parent figure. This person may or may not be biologically related to the participant.

Parental engagement is defined as indirect experiences and examples that may emerge as themes or regarded by the participants as contributory to college success at any time in their lives. Included are activities such as conversations, encouragements, as well as exposure and/or direct involvement with their pre- and in-college regulations and practices (e.g., FERPA release, checking grades, paying bills, checking or sending emails, phone calls, etc.).
Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation incorporates five chapters. Chapter I included the researcher background and positionality, problem statement, need for and purpose of the study, guiding questions, theoretical framework, significance and limitations of the study; and definitions of key terms. Subsequent chapters are as follows:

Chapter II reviewed the literature on Black male success from K-12 through higher education, overview of the Black family and its relationship to schools and education, parental engagement within the parental involvement discourse, higher education and parental engagement, and the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter III shaped the methodological approach for the research study, the design, procedures, data collection, situating the researcher, and ethical considerations.

Chapter IV detailed the findings of the study in terms of a thematic and theoretical analytical framework.

Chapter V concluded the dissertation by discussing the themes and analysis, interpreting them with help of the existing literature, and drawing conclusions. This chapter discussed implications and recommendations for future research and possible practices.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This dissertation explored parental engagement as a success factor for successful Black male collegians. This literature review highlights the relevant research and the ways that this study extends and fills the existing gaps within the discourse. This chapter introduces a brief discussion of Black education in America followed by Black male achievement. Black male achievement has been identified as a problem worthy of national concern and has received an increased focus by educators (Brooks, Jones, & Latten, 2014; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Harris & Taylor, 2012). Black male achievement has been explored at both the primary and secondary levels (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Noguera, 2009) as well as in higher education (Harper, 2008; Strayhorn, 2012).

Prevailing literature discussing the lower achievement of Black males in education is dominated by a deficit narrative that led to the necessity for an anti-deficit framework (Harper & Quaye, 2009) to correct biases. The anti-deficit framework was developed to contextualize this dissertation.

Additionally, Black male achievement literature, both K-12 and higher education, lacks an appropriate focus on societal barriers, such as racism, that impact the success of Black males (Harper, 2012a), which Critical Race Achievement Ideology (CRAI) directly challenges (Carter, 2008). The dominant ideology that the United States is a meritocratic society where all those who work hard and remain focused on education will get ahead.
(i.e., the boot strap theory) has been disproven repeatedly (MacLeod, 2009). The concept of race and racism is operating as an engine to the perpetuation of lowered academic achievement of Black males (Bell, 2004). The following sections explore this concept of race and racism further as follows: Black education, Black Male Achievement, the Black Family and Family Functions in Education, Parents and Family Functions in Compulsory Education, College Success, and Black Parents in Higher Education.

**Black Education**

Education for Black Americans before and after the landmark case of Brown v. Board of Education has long been described as inferior (Bell, 2004; DuBois, 1989). DuBois (1989) argued that education is the pathway out of oppression for Black people and the educated social elite would be critical to lead the country into a more just society. DuBois suggested that Black Americans live with a double consciousness, seeing themselves through their own lens and through the lens of others of the dominant group. Woodson (1990) explored the educational plight of Black Americans and stated:

> The so-called modern education, with all its defects, however, does others so much more good than it does the Negro, because it has been worked out in conformity to the needs of those who have enslaved and oppressed weaker peoples. (p. 5)

Additionally, Woodson emphasized that education in the United States does more for non-Blacks because it was designed to keep Black people oppressed and powerless by
controlling a person’s thinking. Prior to 1954, Black Americans were educated in segregated, inferior buildings; and received a lower educational quality. These disparities led to the landmark Brown v. Board of Education (Brown) decision declaring that separate was inherently unequal.

According to Bell (2004), the Brown ruling certainly did not solve all of the accumulated challenges of the educational system for the Black community. On the contrary, the systemic educational problem for the Black community has been exacerbated. Black males have long been described as a critical flight risk for dropping out, according to Coleman et al. (1966). On the contrary, Alexander (2012) associated the schools’ practice of repetitive over-disciplining measures as being the cause of Black males being at-risk for prison and recidivism. Coleman et al. (1966) underscored the importance of exploring Black male academic achievement. The deficit narrative was foundational and framed the Coleman et al. (1966) outcomes, that subsequently supported the implementation of laws and policies designed to view Black males as academically and socially ill-equipped. This same deficit narrative is utilized in K-12 education scholarship and practices regarding Black parents. The deficit rhetoric is perpetuated by the pervasive narrative that Black parents are disinterested in their children’s education (Lareau, 1987).
Black Male Achievement

The deficit rhetoric of Black male achievement and Black parental involvement are inextricably linked. According to Graves (2010), the achievement gap begins as early as elementary school and later becomes quite difficult to reduce. The underachievement of Black males in elementary school can be attributed to lowered expectations for parental involvement of Black parents when compared to White parents (Graves, 2010) and Black females. The Black male underachievement discourse generally lacks accountability for teachers and schools as contributors (Harper, 2013).

Equally, there are many factors that contribute to the Black males who do succeed and overcome the odds (Harper, 2012a), which is widely ignored. The role of credentialing and viewing schools as a threat to Black culture are two factors that create tensions for Black academic achievement, according to Ogbu and Simon (1998). These two issues highlighted by Ogbu and Simon affect the education of Black youth just as much as the systemic racism of the educational system itself. This limited view on the interaction between Blacks and education in America, Ladson-Billings (2011) suggested, should not be deemed as a challenging task for teachers. However, schools focus on over-disciplining Black boys (Alexander, 2012) rather than student learning (Ladson-Billings, 2011). They are perceived as men instead of boys; thus, their actions are sanctioned more severely than other students (Ladson-Billings, 2011). This perception continues as the young men transition into college.
Harper (2012a) asserted that both (a) the stereotypes of Black boys as being
criminal or breaking rules and (b) the microaggressions are commonplace in Black male
educational experiences. Some of the participants in Harper’s (2014) national study
reported that they were consistently expected by White peers to know where to buy
marijuana on campus. Black student leaders reported that they face more scrutiny and
doubts of their competence from their supervisors in comparison to White peers (Harper
& Hurtado, 2011). Experiences such as the aforementioned can threaten Black male
academic achievement.

Prevailing research describes Black American male achievement and school
underperformance as a pressing issue in education (Harper, 2012b). More specifically,
several reports and educational research (Harper, 2012b; 2014) surmises a myriad of
deficits that describe the limited capabilities of Black males in both secondary- and post-
secondary educational settings. Some scholars dedicated their research agendas to
challenging this phenomenon of deficit framing (Harper, 2014; Ladson-Billings & Tate,
1995; Strayhorn, 2008).

The Black Family and Family Functions in Education

The Black family and education are under-researched; however, the small
literature that exists largely takes a deficiency perspective (Auerbach, 2007) by
concluding that Black families are dysfunctional (McLanahan, 2004). Auerbach (2007)
suggested that school leaders draw negative conclusions about Black parents largely
based upon the frequency of visits to the school. This master narrative ignores the complexities and richness of a group’s cultural life (Montecinos, 1995) and the long-standing perpetual societal barriers that impede their success. Epstein (1987) suggested that there are many spheres of influence on academic achievement and school performance. However, the most critical factor of influence is parental engagement, which includes more than presence inside the school, as contributing to higher school performance (Epstein, 1987; Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

Overwhelmingly, according to Scott and Black (1989), the discourse and literature of family structure are dominated with nuclear family bias and ignore the prevalence of fictive kin in Black American communities. The term fictive (or pseudo) kinship (or family) was coined and utilized (Chatters et al., 1994) as a challenge to the deficit theories positing “broken homes” or non-supportive (Aschenbrenner, 1973), uninvolved parents (Herndon & Hirt, 2004) that contribute to a growing perception that Black American families were lost or incomplete; again norming an entire culture against a White dominant ideology strictly defining family as someone within your direct blood lineage, marriage, or other sociolegal means (Chatters et al., 1994).

The so-called traditional nuclear family structure, which consists of one mother and one father as the parental unit, is less likely to exist today than it was 20 years ago (McAdoo, 1998; Stewart, 2008). According to Aschenbrenner (1973), the definition of family and parents vary in many cases by geographic location and between ethnic
communities. Additionally, Aschenbrenner emphasized that Black families utilize an extended network of community members and friends whose roles are similar to the nuclear family. However, the extended family may lack the direct biological connection. The extended family can consist of aunts, uncles, grandparents, other relatives, and close family associates forming fictive kinship. According to Stewart (2008), fictive kin are individuals within a person’s family structure who are not directly related biologically but who are closely aligned due to continuous support and commitment. Therefore, many Black people may identify someone other than their biological mother or father as their parent. The same is true for a cousin or sibling. Family in the Black community is often socially constructed based upon the needs of the family.

Kane (2000) also noted that Black families tend to live in the same community or household to make daily interaction and assistance possible. In fictive kinship, family is chosen based upon closeness and relational standing. Fictive kin can have a larger role in a family than someone who is blood related (Dilworth-Anderson, 2001; Kane, 2000; Stewart, 2008). According to Chatters et al. (1994), fictive kin hold certain responsibilities in family functions and duties that are above that of basic friendships, which yields a high level of respect to that individual.

Additionally, fictive kin can be more important than biologically-related persons at various times. “Black people can move in and out of several families and have numerous siblings or ‘play’ siblings and parents” (Dilworth-Anderson, 2001, p. 104).
This community network of extended family members developed as a means of surviving and doing more than just getting by in the larger American society (Dilworth-Anderson, 2001). Diamond (1999) asserted that Black families use extended families (or fictive kinship relationships), church, and community support networks to actively engage in their children’s schooling. The mainstream American narrative suggests that people should make it on their own and pull themselves up by their bootstraps (MacLeod, 2009). This cultural difference is not typically acknowledged or accepted by schools.

Therefore, this denial may impact the support fictive parents can provide for their children’s education and in many cases the fictive parental units do not have any legal rights to be involved in school decisions or relationships due to the traditional and legal school structures. School districts that understand the differences in the Black family structure may help educators and administrators engage families in a different fashion. This may also be critical for higher education administrators to keep in mind as Black males transition to college campuses. Hrabowski et al. (1998) suggested that fictive kin as parental figures do contribute to Black male success in college. Therefore, all colleges should have a mechanism that includes fictive kin within the process (Hrabowski et al., 1998). In FERPA, the student has the right to give access to whomever they want and can list them as parent/guardian or another appropriate role.
Parents and Family Functions in Compulsory Education

Studies have concluded that Black parents are less involved than White parents in their children’s K-12 schooling (Diamond, 1999). This lack of involvement is concluded to contribute to less than ideal academic performance (Farley & Allen, 1987). Family engagement in schools is a critical issue to academic achievement and Black males. Epstein (1987) suggested four types of parental involvement styles. These styles range from providing the basic level of need pertaining to health and safety to partnering with community organizations to collaborate with the school district. The mass of existing literature focuses on parental involvement (Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Jeynes, 2007; Robinson & Harris, 2014), family functioning (Richardson, 2009), academic achievement (Herndon & Hirt, 2004), and social mobility (McAdoo, 1981; Yosso et al., 2004) of preadolescents and adolescents (Clark, Dogan, & Akbar, 2003; Jeynes, 2007).

Epstein (1990) attempted to broaden the definition of parental involvement in relation to schools through the development of additional typologies. The two additional types of parental involvement include community and resources, with the foundation being undervalued and lagging behind on influence. There is more than one way for the parent to be involved in their child’s education (Epstein, 1987). Contrary to school leaders’ beliefs that presence within the school is essential for parents, Jeynes (2007) suggested that previous negative experiences with schools added complexity.
Additionally, the historical context of the Black community-school relationship may have a lingering impact on the way Black parents approach school.

In addition to the differences in approach to the school, cultural differences may have larger contextual implications. Robinson and Harris (2014) argued that there should be a broader lens on parent participation and parental engagement with schools to maximize results by considering race and social class. Robinson and Harris specifically attended to socioeconomic and racial differences, and found a disconnect between the traditional definition of parental involvement and increased academic achievement. However, many scholars, such as Lareau (1987), indicated that parental involvement in K-12 schools is a major way of greatly influencing student achievement. Despite this prevalent literature, Robinson and Harris (2014) found that the Black and Latino parents were very interested in being involved but found it difficult without the necessary support systems to do so.

Payne (2005) emphasized that Black families and families from lower-socioeconomic status tend to not feel equipped to build a meaningful relationship with schools. Lareau (1987) interpreted limited interest from families as greater expectations for schools to serve as mechanism to bring resolution instead of characterizing this relationship as a mismatch of expectations or expertise. Instead of attributing the differences as limited interest, there should be resources dedicated to support parents to be engaged with the schools in the ways that they are most interested. Schools should
also acknowledge the other ways that a parent can be engaged rather than the traditional methods (Robinson & Harris, 2014).

Additionally, Black males and families have consistently been addressed in literature as synonymous with poor males and families (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). Payne (2005) is an instructive case and point. Specifically, Payne stated that there is a culture of poverty that explains the performance gaps by race and socioeconomic status. Although Payne’s work has been widely critiqued by other scholars (Noguera, 2008), it describes the way parents in poverty and families from racially diverse backgrounds approach schooling differently compared to the White dominant culture.

Payne (2005) suggested that families from minoritized groups tend to view schools as the experts and they are sending their children to the experts who are best prepared to increase their children’s chances of advancing in society. On the contrary, parents from dominant groups are more likely to see themselves as knowing what is best for their children and are more likely to challenge school officials. This difference in perspective is viewed in the discourse as the parents’ lack of care in education (Lareau, 1987; Sui-Chu & Williams, 1996). The discourse surrounding Black parents being disinterested in education promotes a view where parents alone are responsible for the discrepancy in cultural values between school and home.

Lareau (1987) and many others have situated parental involvement as largely the responsibility of parents in the current context of United States schooling. Sui-Chu and
Williams (1996) conceptualized four dimensions of parental involvement including (a) home discussion, (b) school communication, (c) home supervision (as in homework assistance), and (d) school participation. This commonly held ideology promoting an increase in typical parental involvement measures (i.e., volunteering for the school, attending PTA meetings, attending parent-teacher conferences, and reading to the child at home) has been widely accepted by school districts across the country and through policies since the 1960s.

O’Bryan, Braddock, and Dawkins (2006) suggested that one of the ways to increase parental involvement is through their sons’ sports teams. Many young men from lower-income and first-generation families are interested in school sports. According to O’Bryan et al., as schools are seen as the place and space where many parents who fit these criteria do not feel welcomed, sports are a way to bring parents into the fold. Further, the authors suggested that this increased involvement would allow parents to feel more comfortable being involved in other extracurricular activities and would have major implications on shifts in educational policy and ultimately discourse.

Parental involvement is defined narrowly in the existing literature, primarily surrounding talking to the child about homework and participating in school functions such as parent-teacher conferences and PTA (Lareau, 1987; Sui-Chi & Williams, 1996). To shift this discourse, there must be a focus on expanding the way school districts and scholars approach parents of Black males and their role in their success. This
relationship shift should move towards parental engagement. McCarron and Inkelas (2006) found that parental engagement is salient in first-generation students’ academic success. McCarron and Inkelas examined school encouragement and discussions as opposed to traditional school activity involvement as parental involvement. According to Harper (2012a), this research matters, particularly for higher education because many Black males attending college identify as first-generation students. Another untapped area of parental involvement is the avenue where parents can and are engaged in their sons’ schooling.

This dissertation explored parental engagement to include fictive kin and activities outside of the traditional parent involvement methods. In this regard, this dissertation operationalized a broad definition of parental engagement to include discussions about college, strategies for success, navigating the college application process, major and college selection, and support for college admissions standardized tests (Robinson & Harris, 2014). Furthermore, Vega and Moore (2012) asserted long-lasting benefits of familial support and encouragement in college to African American and Latino students.

Towards parental engagement. It is pivotal that schools shift to a parental engagement relationship in order to reduce the bigger problem at hand; specifically, a higher-than-average dropout rate among Black males. Warren, Hong, Rubin, and Uy (2009) asserted that schools can move from parental involvement to a parental
engagement approach to strengthen the outcomes for students, parents, and schools. Building this reciprocal relationship between the school, parent, and community may help address some of the critical challenges that Black males and their families face in educational achievement, fosters parent leadership, and meets the immediate needs of parents (Warren et al., 2009). Parental engagement is more dynamic than parental involvement, which includes a shared relationship. The parent and the school are responsible for positive outcomes.

Parental engagement consists of different methods that promote a greater relationship within the school. Schools and teachers are two contributors to parental engagement. Comer and Haynes (1991) suggested that teachers’ low expectations of Black parents, specifically from low-income backgrounds, create a climate of disrespect that results in lower parental involvement. Teachers’ low expectation for Black parents and their view of Black students’ home lives as deprived begins as early as their teacher preparation program (DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005). Epstein (1986) and Comer and Haynes (1991) agreed that this early low expectation actually discourages participation and may spread into the classroom, contributing to underachievement. There is a conflict between the teachers’ low expectations and the hopes of Black parents for their children. Kane (2000) asserted that Black families overwhelmingly hope that their children do better than they did; and, “they tend to believe that education and hard work are the necessary vehicles, particularly in light of the societal barriers” (p. 694).
The narrative that Black parents as a group are disinterested in their children’s success has been shown in a convincing collection of studies as inaccurate. Herndon and Hirt (2004) contended that the uninvolved, uninterested, and unsupportive Black parent narrative perpetuates the negative way that schools, teachers, and the community interact with parents and Black males. However, school culture is an important aspect of creating a positive school-family relationship (Banks & Banks, 2010; Comer & Haynes, 1991). Kane (2000) recognized that schools are the cornerstones of communities and provide the beacon of hope for many other families. The relationship between schools and the community must be broader and not one-sided. Epstein (1987) suggested that the research encourages school administrators to look at different methods utilized to involve parents. Comer and Haynes (1991) asserted that schools that institute strict bureaucratic methods for involvement yield less positive results than those with more flexible collaborative models for parents.

**College Success**

Researching the academic achievement of Black Americans has increased within the literature since the 1980s. More recently, the persistence and success of Black males in college as a singular research focus have emerged in the literature. Harper (2014) insisted that the literature pervasively promotes a negative view of Black male persistence in college and school in general as opposed to studying the factors of successful Black male collegians. Strayhorn (2012) focused on the factors of success for
Black male collegians, concluding that a critical factor is developing a “sense of belonging” on the college campus. A sense of belonging refers to the social fit and engagement (Harper & Quaye, 2009) of students in the college setting. Furthermore, Strayhorn (2008) asserted that social, socioeconomic status, and pre-college program involvement play a more significant role in Black male success compared to their White counterparts.

Focusing on students who are persisting in college created a more inclusive discussion of the Black male experience. The deficit and hopeless narrative that begins at an early age in school (Noguera, 2008) may have an impact on the student. Black males consistently battle the threat of the self-fulfilling prophecy known as “stereotype threat” (Steele & Aronson, 1998). A broader prospective is needed to combat the narratives of deficiencies.

**Black Parents in Higher Education**

There is very little empirical research on Black families and higher education pursuit. Parents who are overly involved in their child’s collegiate matriculation are often characterized as “helicopter parents” (Couture, Schwehm, & Couture, 2017). Colleges have a long history of operating under an “in loco parentis” philosophy which places the institution in the role of parent (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2005). Moreover, involvement from parents of college students has been described consistently as negative (Carney-Hall, 2008). However, Cutright (2008) suggested that institutions
should transition from viewing relationships with parents as negative to a valued partnership. Parents have contributed to student success in college and cannot be easily ignored (Couture et al., 2017; Taub, 2008).

There is little research on Black parents and college success. Most of the research conducted on families and college success includes a White American participant sample and thusly represents this perspective. The research that does exist with a Black participant sample in relation to college students is characterized as parental attachment (Samuolis, Layburn, & Schiaffino, 2001), which has a deep negative connotation. This research suggests that Black students have identity-development challenges in the areas of relationship exploration and commitments that are norms for college students as it relates to the students’ attachments to their parents. This type of analysis of Black students’ relationships to their families as it relates to college student development poses a quite stark, but highly inaccurate picture.

Family engagement in higher education has long been viewed as negative (Kiyama, Harper, Ramos, Aguayo, & Page, 2015), with parents characterized in the literature as overbearing and unnecessarily difficult while ignoring the student’s autonomy and responsibility for self-advocacy. Kiyama et al. (2015) suggested that colleges shift the debate from how to limit or manage hoovering parents. Instead, colleges should seek to engage and involve both the parents and other supporters of the students within the process. There is a greater need to explore this topic of parental
engagement within the higher education context and from a multicultural educational lens regarding Black family support for Black male college success.

On the contrary, Mandara (2006) suggested that persistence is directly tied to family functions, but more so parental involvement in monitoring homework, disciplining, and coping functions in Black males. Herndon and Hirt (2004) asserted that Blacks are more likely to rely on support and advice from family members and fictive kin at a greater instance than trained professionals. Furthermore, Herndon and Hirt (2004) asserted that there is a strong correlation between family cohesion and Black student persistence.

Furthermore, resiliency is a trademark of Black families and this characteristic centers around the role the family impacts perseverance and survival of obstacles and crises (McAdoo, 1993). There is a greater need to explore this topic of parental engagement within the higher education context and from a multicultural educational lens regarding Black family support for Black male college success. Tierney and Auerbach (2005) discussed the need for colleges to do more in engaging parents in college. They posited that the engagement of Black parents in the college process is a critical recipe in the success of Black students. Palmer, Davis, and Maramba (2011) researched Black males at an Historically Black College or University (HBCU) and found that engaged families positively impact success in college.
Palmer et al. (2011) concluded two significant findings that include (a) the definition of family should be expanded at universities and (b) institutions should reconsider their engagement strategy with parents. Additionally, Palmer et al. found that all of the Black men that they interviewed were considered underprepared for college upon entry, but they all graduated. The majority of the students attributed their perseverance and resiliency to the support that they received from their parents and extended families. Considering that his study was conducted with students at an HBCU, there is a need to study a group of Black males at PWIs to determine its transferability to other institutions.

In an effort to combat the pervasive narrative that Black males do not care about education, Harper and Davis (2012) collected counter-narratives from 304 Black males in college regarding their interest in their education. All of the participants were applicants of a competitive doctoral preparation program. One participant’s narrative opposed the widely held belief that Black parents do not care about education. In the narrative, the young man’s uneducated grandmother raised him and insisted that he and his siblings attend college and attain their degrees; they did. The young man was taught that college was the only avenue to success. This was also true for other essays Harper and Davis (2012) collected; despite contrary messages shown in school, on television, and by teachers.
Similarly, Hrabowski et al. (1998) conducted a qualitative study on high achieving Black males to determine the role of their parents in their college success. This study concluded that there were a few factors that mitigated neighborhood, socioeconomic status, peers, school differentials, and other negative societal messages. Those factors were strict discipline, nurturance, community connectedness, and parent-determined engagement (Hrabowski et al., 1998). In this study, traditional forms of parental involvement were not significantly linked to Black male students’ high performance. Parent-determined engagement could range from assistance with homework and within the school to a high emphasis on education and performance and parental advocacy for participating in classes and programs that increased success. Although traditional methods do work for some Black males; overall, there were other parental engagement strategies that had a broader impact on their success.

**Theoretical Framework**

Carter’s (2008) Critical Race Achievement Ideology (CRAI) was utilized to explore the impact of parent engagement on successful Black male collegians. CRAI was selected because it provides a structure and framework for examining successful Black students. It also is a blend of two other commonly used frameworks in the literature that explore similar problems, Critical Race Theory and Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework. The different frameworks used to explore race and Black male education in the existing literature was explored prior to selecting CRAI as the framework.
Theories on Race and the Education of Black Males

Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework (Harper, 2012a), and Critical Race Achievement Ideology (Carter, 2008) were considered as frameworks. Harper (2012a) positioned the Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework strategies and practices that promote greater achievement by Black males within a racist society. CRAI focuses on the ideologies held by successful students in relation to their understanding of race. CRAI is a blend of the other two frames as a means to fully explore the problem statement and research questions.

Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory (CRT) can be utilized to help understand the systemic nature that Black males and Black families have been further marginalized through the field of education. CRT was developed from legal scholarship as a way to conceptualize the legal contextual relationship with race and racism (Bell, 1980). Beginning in 1954, the Brown v. Board of Education (Brown) cases led to major legal reforms that continue to impact the field of education. Prior to these decisions, schools were legally allowed to have segregated schools with unequal buildings, textbooks, and overcrowded classrooms. Brown ended the separate but equal doctrine, which was legal. Bell (1980) declared that Brown “transformed blacks from beggars pleading for decent treatment to citizens demanding equal treatment under the law” (p. 518).
According to Russo, Harris, and Sandidge (1994), *Brown* was the most “significant” ruling of its time for American public education. “De jure segregation of public education based on race deprived minority children of educational opportunities in violation of the 14th amendment” (Russo et al., 1994, p. 297). Bell (1980) indicated that *Brown I* passed with great anticipation throughout the country to resolve the inequality; however, there was significant resistance to enacting its ruling. School districts opposed the court order with little action towards honoring the decision or ramifications for ignoring the ruling (Bell, 1980).

Following this decision, *Brown II* (in 1955) provided some remedy to this conflict by requesting the State Attorney Generals where segregation was legal to submit plans for how their public schools were to proceed with desegregation. Russo et al. (1994) described *Brown II* as doing “virtually nothing.” *Brown II*’s vagueness generated detrimental effects on Black male achievement in schools (Bell, 2004). This occurred through policies and are the byproducts of sociopolitical context of White flight, riots, the resegregation of schools and heavy policing in largely Black neighborhoods (Bell, 2004). These circumstances were made possible by laws and practices which support the widespread negative narrative (Bell, 2004).

Under these laws and practices, schools have become more segregated in present-day America than when segregation was legal (Orfield & Lee, 2007). Frankenberg, Lee, and Orfield (2003) outlined the resegregation process of our schools by courts
increasingly granting “unitary status” to many school districts that were previously mandated to segregate. School districts that were granted unitary status were no longer mandated to comply with post-\textit{Brown} requirements to submit any changes in school boundary plans for review and approval. Boger and Orfield (2009) showed the trends of school district resegregation along racial and socioeconomic lines post unitary status.

Bell (1992), the father of CRT, understood this eventuality as an expression of the permanence of race in our society. Bell sought to utilize CRT as an apparatus for challenging the dominant narrative (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). It is an important and essential element for qualitative CRT studies, especially when using narrative inquiry, to maintain the integrity of participants’ experiences (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT focuses on “naming one’s own reality,” and finding the participant’s “voice” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) as a critical element in maintaining the integrity of participants’ experiences. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) suggested three foundational reasons why understanding people’s experiences from their own perspective is important. Ladson-Billings and Tate specifically indicated that (a) racism is socially constructed, (b) CRT assists people within marginalized groups to maintain their sanity, and (c) CRT serves as an avenue for storytellers to counter the norm narratives that saturate the predominant discourse.

The CRT framework is built upon five basic tenets (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The five basic tenets are (a)
counter-storytelling, (b) permanence of racism, (c) Whiteness as property, (d) interest conversion, and (e) the critique of liberalism. Counter-storytelling not only foregrounds the participant’s “voice” but also tells the narratives of marginalized groups from their own perspective. This researcher asserts that CRT helps shape, shift, and change the negative discourse; generally focused on deficits, remediation, non-resiliency, non-persistence of marginalized groups without recognizing the larger societal and structural forces that slant and distort the playing field. This is the meaning behind permanence of racism, the second tenet. Racism controls our society and is inherent (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998) in every aspect of American institutions. Racism serves the sole purpose of perpetuating the power structure. White privilege and power are byproducts of this structure, which includes educational opportunities as CRT suggests (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Strayhorn, 2008).

The law and legal system, inclusive of the courts and police, maintain this structure. Therefore, it is essential to consider the role race impacts societal outcomes (Iverson, 2007; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). There have been many attempts to create greater societal outcomes for marginalized groups; however, improvement has been gradual and slow (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Iverson (2007) insisted that any positive strategies, plans, and outcomes that ignore this structure are condemned to produce ineffective results. According to CRT scholars (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-
Billings, 1998), racism as an aberrant phenomenon in society fails to acknowledge the impact of the everyday discriminatory acts and the rules that support its maintenance.

Whiteness as an ideal is heralded by the systematic structure. All of its rights and privileges are purported as an asset that only White individuals can possess to enjoy, use, and benefit from (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). With Whiteness as property being the third tenet, it becomes more obvious that the fourth tenet is interest convergence. Interest convergence is the acknowledgement that White people were the real “winners” of civil rights legislation for Black Americans were granted basic rights superficially that they have enjoyed for a couple hundred years. Ladson-Billings (1998) asserted that affirmative action is a prime example of legislation that benefits White Americans more by noting that the largest recipients of Civil Rights legislation have been White women. These benefactors of affirmative action are more likely members of households with White children and men passing on their benefits more broadly to White Americans generally (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that CRT heavily critiques liberalism that purports to spread democracy more broadly utilizing neutrality, colorblindness ideals, and equality without equity. As CRT tenets (a) through (d) assert, the American system is inherently racist; therefore, not acknowledging its existence and impact as it permeates every facet of society (Iverson, 2007) at least passively works against social justice which proponents of CRT support. CRT challenges the assumption that White individual
experiences serve as the bedrock of normative standards of achievement in college (Iverson, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

**Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework.** Harper (2014) chronicled the 15-year movement to improve Black male success in college. Harper presented several critiques of the research. The first is the extensive focus on the deficits within the Black male population. Unfortunately, this view has driven the movement, public policy, and prevailing discourse (Harper, 2014). The second is the superficiality of policies that fail to address the underlying structural barriers to student success (Harper & Hurtado, 2011). Mentoring programs are oftentimes haphazardly developed by individuals who honestly may have wanted to “do something” about academic achievement for Black males (Harper, 2014). However, these programs fail to address some of the intractable structural issues that prevent or undermine Black male success in college. Accordingly, Harper (2014) asserted that institutions have placed the student at the center of the problem without any acknowledgement of the institution’s role in promoting student success. Another example often found in PWIs is the naming of a chief diversity officer who would be expected to solely fix the problem in Black male achievement (Harper, 2014). Again, this attempt leaves the structural issues unaddressed.

Furthermore, Harper (2014) emphasized that the literature focuses on Black males who did not complete college within six years, rather than studying those who were achieving. In a national study, Harper (2012a) cited that far too many of the young men
indicated that this was the first time anyone ever asked them how and why they were succeeding. In this same study, Harper introduced the Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework which educators are encouraged to use to more accurately understand Black male collegian experiences and success.

The framework shown in Figure 2 (Harper, 2012a, p. 5) was created for a study of high achieving college students of color in STEM majors, but could prove useful with other populations. Through the utilization of this framework and other narratives, the focus on the stories of Black males who are persisting in college assists in shifting the discourse (Harper, 2014).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRE-COLLEGE SOCIALIZATION AND READINESS</th>
<th>COLLEGE ACHIEVEMENT</th>
<th>POST-COLLEGE SUCCESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAMILIAL FACTORS</strong></td>
<td><strong>CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES</strong></td>
<td><strong>GRADUATE SCHOOL ENROLLMENT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do family members nurture and sustain Black male students’ interest in school?</td>
<td>What compels one to speak and participate actively in courses in which he is the only Black student?</td>
<td>What happened in college to develop and support Black male students’ interest in pursuing degrees beyond the baccalaureate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do parents help shape Black men’s college aspirations?</td>
<td>How do Black undergraduate men earn GPAs above 3.0 in majors for which they were academically underprepared?</td>
<td>How do Black undergraduate men who experience racism at predominantly white universities maintain their commitment to pursuing graduate and professional degrees at similar types of institutions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K-12 SCHOOL FORCES</strong></td>
<td><strong>PEERS</strong></td>
<td><strong>CAREER READINESS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do teachers and other school agents do to assist Black men in getting to college?</td>
<td><strong>PERSISTENCE</strong></td>
<td>Which college experiences enable Black men to compete successfully for careers in their fields?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do Black male students negotiate academic achievement alongside peer acceptance?</td>
<td><strong>FACULTY</strong></td>
<td>What prepares Black male achievements for the racial politics they will encounter in post-college workplace settings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OUT-OF-SCHOOL COLLEGE PREP RESOURCES</strong></td>
<td><strong>OUT-OF-CLASS ENGAGEMENT</strong></td>
<td>How do faculty and other institutional agents enhance Black men’s career development and readiness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do low-income and first generation Black male students acquire knowledge about college?</td>
<td>What compels Black men to take advantage of campus resources and engagement opportunities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Critical Race Achievement Ideology. Carter (2008) developed CRAI in response to observed shortcomings of CRT scholars to provide success factors of Black students. CRAI is a newer perspective that promotes critical factors that Black students employ to succeed against all odds and barriers to success. The purpose of CRAI is to further explain and explore the phenomena of Black student racial construction (Carter, 2008). CRAI acknowledges that achievement and race are not independent. On the contrary, achievement is interrelated with race, power, and social class (Bell, 1992; Carter, 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Both CRT’s and CRAI’s recognition of the connected relationship between the social structure and race creates a paradigm shift in addressing the academic achievement of Black males.

CRAI blends the use of critical narrative inquiry and CRT in research as a means of producing scholarship around collecting narratives of Black students focused on their success instead of deficit (Carter, 2008). CRAI also challenges the theories espoused by Ogbu and Simon (1998) regarding “acting White” and fearing success. CRAI does this by positing six components held by Black students as a means of redefining achievement (Carter, 2008). The six dimensions of the ideology are as follows:

1. Students believe in themselves and feel that individual efforts and self-accountability lead to school success.

2. Students view achievement as a human, raceless character trait embedded in their sense of self as a racial being.
3. Students possess a critical consciousness about racism and the challenges it presents to their present and future opportunities as well as other members of their racial group.

4. Students possess a pragmatic attitude about the value of schooling for their future.

5. Students value multicultural competence as a skill for success.

6. Students develop adaptive strategies for overcoming racism in the school context that allow them to maintain high academic achievement and strong racial/ethnic self-definitions. (Carter, 2008, p. 491)

The dimensions of CRAI center on the student’s view of his own success and the factors that contribute to them, as illustrated in Figure 3 (Carter, 2008, p. 479). The dimensions of CRAI provide clarity and understanding of the components that influence the student’s conceptualization of race and achievement at a micro-level. CRT tenets construct race at a macro-level. This researcher determined to use CRAI in the framing of this study because it focuses on the student’s ability to conceptualize race, its salience and achievement within a predominantly white space as central characteristics. These are essential to this line of inquiry within a college setting. Carter (2008) highlighted that Black students must utilize adaptive strategies to succeed in school and maintain positive attitudes to overcome racism. Black students must decide how they will deal with the
racism and the barriers it presents in addition to being aware of its existence (Carter, 2008).

Figure 3. The Interrelatedness of Race and Achievement Self-Constructions
Carter (2008) suggested that Black students must align all six components to successfully navigate school success and maintain a strong salience to their race as a Black person. CRAI assists educators to understand the nuance of race from the student’s perspective and how achievement ideologies are formed. Carter (2008) admittedly noted that her study did not examine average or underperforming students. This researcher examined Black male collegians who persisted in college. The participants were recent graduates or soon to be graduates (between December 2018 and December 2019); therefore, it was appropriate to utilize CRAI. The utilization of CRAI in the collegiate context extends its use from high achieving high school students.

Summary

This researcher adds to the literature by exploring the intersections of parental engagement of Black parents, Black males, and college success using the perspective of CRAI. These topics are discussed separately within the literature, but parental engagement throughout the Black male’s life has not been widely researched as a contributing factor to college success. Understanding the lived experiences of marginalized groups from their perspectives and not from a middle-class privileged lens on how we conceptualize and address relevant issues is important. CRAI as an analytical method for understanding both the narratives of the Black males also served as a self-check on my acquired privilege and social capital. It allowed the voices of participants to drive the discussion and the implications.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is the general framework that was utilized to study the relationship of successful Black male collegians and parental engagement. The inquiry method was akin to critical narrative inquiry. As in a narrative inquiry, this qualitative research method collects personal accounts of a person’s lived experiences (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Merriam, 2002) in their recounting of past experiences. Narrative inquiries provide researchers with a personal accounting of someone’s experiences in their own words. Merriam (2002) outlined descriptions of narrative inquiry, which is why this researcher selected this method, that include (a) analyzing lives by using narratives, (b) using words and stories directly from the participant, (c) using data that come directly from the participant, and (d) taking the perspective of the narrator and not that of society.

For this dissertation, it was important that the research scaffolds the data in a way that is true to the voices and lived experiences of the Black male participants and their families. According to Creswell (2014), it is important to understand the way in which the participant understands the problem or issue, not the researcher. Scott (1992) explained:

When experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject (the person who had the experience or the historian who recounts it)
becomes the bedrock of evidence upon which explanation is built. Questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, and how one’s vision is structured—about language (or discourse) and history—are left aside. (p. 25)

This research design employs narrative inquiry in concert with critical context analysis frames and analysis. It is important to contextualize lived experiences through a sociocultural lens to have a discourse that includes the full experience of the population being researched. CRAI serves as the theoretical framework for design and analysis. This approach contests the dominant deficit framing of much research and discourse on the Black male experience in education.

This dissertation used CRAI as an extension of CRT to approach the assumption that race is salient in the structure of schools and the idea of families. The acknowledgement of this fact guided the interpretation of data. Storytelling is the mechanism for collecting the stories. Ladson-Billings (1998) illuminated the central role that counter-narratives have on our society by stating that “oppression is rationalized, causing little self-examination by the oppressor” (p. 14). Counter-narratives for Black males in this dissertation can provide contradictions to prevailing literature on Black males in college.
Critical Race Achievement Ideology Methodology

The salience of racism in the American educational system and society was assumed relevant and essential to the analysis. Counter-storytelling is an important mechanism to highlight the narratives of marginalized groups from their own voice. For Black males, specifically, there has been an assault on this population widely characterized as ill-equipped, but there is research that highlights the successes that counter that narrative (Harper, 2014; Strayhorn, 2008). It is equally as important to explore the success factors of Black males to combat the pervasive deficit ideology. McLeod (2009) explained the commonly held belief that any child can succeed as long as he or she has the ambition to do so. McLeod coined this as “achievement ideology.” This type of socially constructed meritocratic ideology is given more prominence through the publicity of rags to riches stories like President Barack Obama and others. However, in reality this is not true; race is a preeminent force in American society (Bell, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

For purposes of this dissertation, the following assumptions influenced the analysis. First, this researcher made use of counter-stories as central to the discourse and its data collection. The CRT tenet that racism is part of the fabric of our society is also accepted as true for the analysis, as is the full rejection of the neoliberalist perspective that we live in a color blind society. Utilizing CRAI in the analysis and framework for this dissertation is essential at making marginalized groups the center and directly
challenges the notion of colorblindness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRAI provided an extension to this challenge by focusing on the six dimensions that Black students employ for academic achievement (Carter, 2008). This dissertation used CRAI to determine whether or not the successful Black male collegians believe in themselves, view achievement as a raceless character trait, were aware of racism and the challenges it presents to their success, believe in the value of school, and possess adaptive strategies for overcoming racism in school. These dimensions extend CRT to focus on the practices and beliefs of successful Black males in college. Additionally, this researcher explored the relationship of parental engagement with successful Black male collegians.

The research questions and protocols for this study were derived to gather themes related to CRT and CRAI as counter-narratives. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What types of parental engagement do Black male collegians attribute to their college success?
2. What is the participant’s perception of the role of race and racism in their own success and the way their parent’s contribution to it?
3. Which characteristics of traditional parent involvement did the Black male collegians recall their parent’s performing?
The Researcher

I am a Black, male doctoral candidate in the Cultural Foundations of Education program at Kent State University. I grew up in a predominantly poor, African American neighborhood in Detroit, MI. I was educated in the Detroit Public School system and heard how Black males were not expected to succeed. The narrative that we were at-risk, high-risk, disadvantaged, and remedial pervaded the schools and community where I lived. Somehow, I overcame those negative characterizations, both in high school and college. I primarily attribute this fact to my parents and grandparents. I have worked in both the secondary- and post-secondary education settings, dedicating myself to mentoring Black males. Albeit, I identify with this research topic and the participants on some level, my research was designed to provide voice to a marginalized group through counter-storytelling to balance the master narratives. Both Black males and their family experiences were explored in this research.

Additionally, my insider perspective of how the educational system functions as well as lived experiences as a Black male gave me a familiar lens. However, I stayed true to the authentic nature of the lived experiences of the participants. As a person who grew up in a low-income family and being a member of a marginalized group, I understand the importance of countering the master narrative. It also gives me a perspective on the power that the discourse frames and dominants our understanding of people’s educational experiences. In America, race has served as a foundation for our
educational system; how we view it, how we access it, and how to succeed in it. This researcher sought to understand this phenomenon more deeply.

**Ethical Considerations**

This dissertation, on the surface, did not pose many risks; however, there could be a potential risk that may be involved related to everyday experiences. During interviews, participants were asked to consider the role that race, gender, and their parents’ contributions to their college success experiences. There could be moments in a person’s life experience that a question may illicit a negative response or memory. Therefore, this researcher explained that each participant had the right to share information if he was comfortable doing so. Additionally, each participant was reminded that he could choose to revoke consent at any time in writing through email, and without explanation.

To ensure the participants’ confidentiality, informed consent for participation (See Appendix A), informed consent for audio recording (See Appendix B) and interview notes were stored in a locked cabinet in a key-card-access office on the NBU campus. Audio files were stored electronically in a password-protected folder on this researcher’s personal computer, which was also password protected. The computer password and the password-protected folder were different and this researcher was the only person with access to these folders. The interviews occurred in a private room inside of a publicly-accessible community building. This interview location allowed for confidentiality and privacy while also providing a public location familiar to participants. The transcriptions
and interview notes were stored separately from the audio files and any written clarification after the participant received regarding the transcriptions. These were stored in this researcher’s home office. Each participant was given a pseudonym to further protect identity. These ethical considerations were enacted to ensure participant confidentiality and integrity.

The participants were asked to share stories about their educational journey that could have evoked uncontrollable deep emotions and reactions that may result from a negative experience. This did not occur during the interview or focus group process. While these instances are not ones that the study could avoid, a list of available resources was readily available upon request should a participant need professional services.

**Data Collection**

The data were collected through semi-structured, in-person interviews (see Appendix C for Guiding Questions for Interviews and Protocol). Each participant completed a demographics form prior to their interview (see Appendix D for Demographic Information Questionnaire). Interviews were also audio recorded and later transcribed. Six undergraduate Black male collegians were asked to reflect back to childhood, from earliest memory of the presentation of college through the last few years of their college experience as it relates to parental support. Participants were also asked to reflect on their parents’ education level, the parents’ core values of a college education. Participants were also asked to reflect on their interactions with college-educated
individuals, and their exposure to college in general while growing up. Specific examples and details were encouraged. The participants were also asked to recount any discussions they had with their parents about college from the earliest age to their recent years in college.

The participant interviews were semi-structured therefore providing for much consistency in the transcripts. However, there were a few questions asked to some participants through the interviews that were based upon the path of the stories that they shared that were not asked of other participants. The aforementioned may be viewed as a potential limitation; however, this is not one that diminishes from conclusions that were eventually drawn.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was established through triangulation, member checking, as well as reflexive journaling and debriefing with the dissertation director after each level of analysis. Initially, triangulation was incorporated into the research methods and procedures to further confirm and validate the emergent themes. Triangulation is a method used in qualitative research to provide a comprehensive understanding of the data presented from multiple data sources (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Creswell, 2014). Triangulation as strategy provides rich understanding of phenomena by corroborating the findings from several data sources (Creswell, 2014; Hatch, 2002). To provide additional validity, participants engaged in an individual interview and a focus group that included
all of the participants. This focus group was conducted after the initial one-on-one interviews with the participants to discuss their perceptions of race, college success factors, and parental engagement. The focus group session was audio recorded to ensure that outlined themes were accurately reflective of the participant’s words and narratives. (See Appendix E for Guiding Questions and Outline for Focus Group.)

**Member Checking**

Once the interviews and focus group were completed, the audio recordings were transcribed. One step in the analysis was member checking. Each participant was given his transcribed interview and allowed at least one week to provide clarity or additional information that may be needed for the researcher to give greater context and understanding of a particular portion of the discussion. Two participants responded that there were no additional details to be added. The four remaining participants did not respond. During the informed consent explanation, the participants were instructed to return the transcript with any corrections or additions within a week. The participants were also informed that the lack of a response meant that there was no additional feedback to share. After a week lapsed and no additional feedback was shared, each transcription and three-minute paper from the participants’ interviews and focus group were then analyzed.
Reflexive Journaling and Debriefing

This researcher included reflexive journaling after each interview to check bias, note initial thoughts from the interviews and any additional questions that were not asked or needed to be added to the focus group to provide greater clarity. The reflexive journal was only reviewed and utilized to determine focus group questions to seek additional information from the participants. The journals were not considered at any other point during the analysis process. After each level of analysis and coding, this researcher reviewed the emergent themes to debrief the analysis of the participants’ narratives with the dissertation director. This debriefing assisted to refine the themes and aligned the research questions. The findings were constructed based upon these debriefings and triangulation of the data minimized bias and confirmed emergent themes.

The Setting

The setting was a large research university which is referred to as Nelson-Boston University, and NBU is its pseudonym. NBU is located in a small Midwestern urban city with a residential population of approximately 30,000. NBU enrolls more than 28,000 undergraduate students of which 9% identify as Black. NBU offers many programs that are intended to facilitate the success of Black males and other underrepresented students. These programs include a Black male support group, a peer mentoring program to encourage students to connect to resources, and financial support for students who are
most in need. Thirty-four percent of NBU undergraduate students receive the Pell Grant, indicating a limited income family background.

**Participant Selection**

The sample included six Black males enrolled at NBU. Each participant was a graduating senior (i.e., a student in his final year of college) or a recent graduate (December 2018) at the time of the interview. Each of the Black males graduated from a public high school located within a 50-mile radius of the university. The overall purpose was to select participants from diverse family structures and backgrounds. Initially, ten Black males volunteered to participate. Demographics of a prospective participant and his ability to fully commit to the two components of this dissertation were considered when participants were selected.

Participants were recruited through an email sent by a university staff member who served in an administrative role within the multicultural and diversity offices. The email sent to potential participants included the purpose and design of the study while also requesting their participation through informed consent. The informed consent form was also sent electronically, and signed prior to participation.

**Participant Description**

Table 1 includes a description of the Black males who were selected to participate. The demographics of each participant was intended to provide framing for
the experiences shared by the participants. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect identity and provide anonymity to allow for the greatest transparency.

Each participant was asked to identify his parent’s highest education level and work status. Additionally, information was gathered on the participant’s type of high school and location, pre-college preparation, whether or not they transferred, and if they attended community college at any time. All of this information was self-reported by the participant. Based upon responses, this researcher classified information into categories. Two categories, type of high school and socioeconomic status (SES), required a little more decision making to determine. The public or private school category is self-explanatory. However, all public school districts that bordered a larger urban public school district were classified as inner-ring suburban. School districts that did not border the larger city limits were classified as suburban. There was no need to identify the location of private schools because they did not provide additional context for analysis purposes. The SES of each participant’s family while growing up was categorized by the income range selected on the demographics form. The social status classifications are indicated in Table 2.
Table 1

*Participant Descriptions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Identified Parent(s)</th>
<th>College GPA Range</th>
<th>Parent’s Education Type of High School</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Parent Work Status</th>
<th>Pre - College Prep</th>
<th>Transfer</th>
<th>Pre - College 2-Year Comm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron Williams</td>
<td>Father Mother Grandmother</td>
<td>2.0 – 2.49</td>
<td>High School Private, Catholic</td>
<td>Working $30,000-$75,000</td>
<td>Full-Time Salary</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavaughn Curry</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2.5 – 2.99</td>
<td>Associates Public, Inner-Ring Suburban</td>
<td>Working Poor $0-$30,000</td>
<td>Full-Time Hourly</td>
<td>PESOP AP Honors</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jon Robinson</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2.5 – 2.99</td>
<td>Some College Public, Suburban</td>
<td>Working $30,000-$75,000</td>
<td>Full-Time Salary</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymon Crawford</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>3.0-3.5</td>
<td>High School Drop Out Public, Large Urban</td>
<td>Working Poor $0-$30,000</td>
<td>Full-Time Hourly</td>
<td>UB TRIO AP Honors</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claude Roberts</td>
<td>Mother Father</td>
<td>3.0-3.5</td>
<td>Some College Private, Christian</td>
<td>Middle Class $125-$175,000</td>
<td>Full-Time Salary</td>
<td>ACT/ SAT Prep</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerome Sampson</td>
<td>Mother Sister Late Father</td>
<td>2.5 – 2.99</td>
<td>High School Public, Inner-Ring Suburban</td>
<td>Working $30,000-$75,000</td>
<td>Full-Time Salary</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated in Table 2, participants’ backgrounds consisted of three of the six social class status. Most of the participants self-reported that their social backgrounds growing up and by way of income range were Working Poor or Working Class. No participant reported their background as Lower Middle Class, Upper Middle Class, or Wealthy.

Table 2

**Social Status Classifications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Social Class Status</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0-$30,000</td>
<td>Working Poor Class</td>
<td>Cavaughn Curry, Raymon Crawford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 – $75,000</td>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>Aaron Williams, Jon Robinson, Jerome Sampson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 - $125,000</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$125,000 - $175,000</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>Claude Roberts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$175,000 - $225,000</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$225,000+</td>
<td>Wealthy</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview Process

Once a successful collegian expressed interest, an initial discussion occurred to gauge the level of interest and availability to fully participate. The participants contributed in both an individual interview and in one focus group. Prior to the one-on-one interview, participants were requested to complete a basic demographic information questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire was a short background assessment that was completed in five minutes or less. Most participants completed the questionnaire immediately before the interview, and after this researcher explained the informed consent and purpose of the demographic information. The individual interviews were mostly 45 minutes to 70 minutes in duration.

The focus group was designed to triangulate responses with the individual interview. The focus group provided multiple modes of engagement. It had a carousel activity where each participant responded to questions on a large poster board. Each participant also completed a three-minute paper on relevant topics; and finally, all openly discussed their experiences on topics related to their education, parental engagement, and their conceptualization of racism as well as its impacts on their pursuit of education. The focus group questions were revised and developed based upon themes identified from an initial analysis of the individual interviews. The focus group questions were designed to identify inconsistency in patterns of answers, themes, and potential gaps in the theoretical framing. The focus group duration was approximately 90 minutes.
Participants were asked to identify a parent or any person who provided the most significant role on their academic success. This identified person was oftentimes one or both biological parents, but not always. Participants also selected a sister and a grandmother as having performed a role akin to the traditional parental role. The interviews required participants to recount experiences and perceptions that spanned their entire educational journey. During that time, the participants had different individuals who served in the parental role (including fictive kinship). One participant, Jerome Sampson, revealed that his father passed away; afterwards, his sister stepped into the parental figure role. Aaron Williams identified his grandmother as having a significant role in his upbringing and considered her as a parent. Each participant was asked to identify their parental figure and respond to the questions with that person or those persons in mind. For the purposes of this dissertation, there is a greater importance on the individual who the Black male identifies as having the largest role in assisting the student in enrolling in college and continues to inspire college success. Although participants were asked to identify parental figure(s), the parents were not directly participants. This remains to be pursued in the future.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in three stages including (a) initial emergent themes analysis, (b) coding which categorized the themes into parents and ideologies, and (c) theoretical analysis using CRAI. First, from the transcribed interviews, focus group
session, and writing prompts, this researcher identified emergent themes and commonalities between the narratives shared by the Black male collegians. Second, the emergent themes were coded into two larger categories. Third and last, each participant’s interview was further analyzed using CRAI dimensions.

After each interview, critical self-reflection was conducted through a reflexive journal (Hatch, 2002). In this reflexive journal, notes were written to check biases and compile immediate thoughts post interviews. Although these notes were kept throughout the process, they were not specifically analyzed or otherwise used thereafter. The demographic background data on the participant (e.g., SES, household composition, household educational attainment, etc.) were only considered after all analyses were completed and were determined not to have much impact with this sample. Chapter IV includes the analyses of the two findings areas.

**First Stage Analysis: Initial Emergent Themes**

The initial analysis identified all items and themes that emerged through each of the transcriptions (open coding). According to Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, and Terry (2019), thematic analysis systematically identifies and organizes shared meaning from lived experiences. The first read through required highlighting the major themes that were shared across the interviews, commonalities among the interviews, and any theme directly related to answering the research questions. From this process, another read through was conducted to see if any other themes emerged after reading all of the
transcripts to ensure accuracy of the first read through of the data. It also checked for the relevance and consistency in the interpretation of the data. The initial analysis resulted in the open coding shown in Table 3. This table displays a sample of the initial emergent themes, in no particular order, that were confirmed or aborted after the focus group and later coded in the secondary categorical codes.

**Second Stage Analysis: Categorical Coding**

The second stage of analysis included coding of the data into the researcher’s two larger categories consistent with the research questions, i.e., parental engagement strategies and Black male beliefs of success. Braun et al., (2019) explained that “codes are building blocks of analysis” (p. 61). The codes were succinct ways of categorizing the themes in two larger brackets to identify later whether or not the research questions were answered. The initial coding provided a baseline of all of the themes and commonalities that existed across the participant narratives. The secondary analysis resulted in the categories and codes as shown in Table 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religion, church, and the Bible</td>
<td>Parents involved in the school</td>
<td>Conversations about education and school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents didn’t read to them</td>
<td>Education was important</td>
<td>Fear of police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigger than self; education was for the community</td>
<td>Do homework before going outside</td>
<td>Parents did not set study times or reading times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believed in themselves</td>
<td>Black male role models necessary</td>
<td>Looked for community of peers in college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends were important initially to continuing</td>
<td>Family and friends of parents were educated and talked about school</td>
<td>Parents had phrases that helped them be successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education was for “something bigger”</td>
<td>Most liked school growing</td>
<td>Education was more than just the money: building the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents kept motivating them while in college</td>
<td>Teachers had low expectations for them</td>
<td>Being a Black man was important to most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understood stereotypes of Black men; most wanted to defy those stereotypes</td>
<td>Calls from parents: “Just checking in”</td>
<td>Asking questions about school, life, class, and decisions showed up multiple times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education is for my family</td>
<td>Working twice as hard in high school; must start taking school seriously; can’t be a slacker</td>
<td>Books were not in the house for most; taking trips to the library; reading the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success is about self-accountability</td>
<td>Success isn’t a White thing; success is possible</td>
<td>Black men were not expected to be successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with others is important; most likely very few Blacks in career</td>
<td>Speaking for the entire race: President of the Black people</td>
<td>You have a role in your success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

Categorical Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black Parents</th>
<th>Black Male Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion, church, and the Bible</strong></td>
<td>Education was for ‘something bigger; for the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conversations about education and school; do homework before going outside</strong></td>
<td>Education was important believed in themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family and friends of parents were educated and talked about school</strong></td>
<td>Black male role models necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents did not set study times or reading times</strong></td>
<td>Friends were important initially to continuing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents had phrases that helped them be successful</strong></td>
<td>Education was more than just the money; building the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents kept motivating them while in college; calls from parents: “Just checking in”</strong></td>
<td>Looked for community of peers in college; being a Black man was important to most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education is for my family</strong></td>
<td>Understood stereotypes of Black men: most wanted to defy those stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working twice as hard in high school; must start taking school seriously; cannot be a slacker</strong></td>
<td>Success is not a White thing: success is possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working with others is important; most likely very few Blacks in career</strong></td>
<td>Speaking for the entire race: President of the Black people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Books were not in the house for most; taking trips to the library; reading the Bible</strong></td>
<td>Success is about self-accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asking questions about school, life, class, and decisions showed up multiple times</strong></td>
<td>You have a role in your success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education is about getting a good job</strong></td>
<td>Black men were not expected to be successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selective response: pick and choose how to respond, tempering response, monitor volume, and not getting physical when facing racism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Final Stage Analysis: Theoretical Coding

Once the first two stages were completed, the coded data themes were analyzed using the template of the CRAI theory on ideologies of successful Black male collegians. During this final stage of analysis, the participant’s beliefs emerged and mostly fit the dimensions that Carter (2008) posited. Once the three stages of analysis were completed, to confirm identified themes and relevancy of the theoretical approach, the coded data were triangulated with the responses from the focus groups. The focus group questions had been designed to identify inconsistent patterns and potential gaps in the theoretical framing after open coding. The theoretical coding that lead to the final findings are shown in Table 5. The findings were based on all three levels of coding and focused on the theory, any gaps, and connected the relationship identified with parents and Black male success.

In this coding process, there were some themes that emerged that were unexpected, some resonated with this researcher’s personal experiences, and much connected to the existing literature. Chapter IV includes the analysis of findings, and Chapter V discusses findings and provides overall conclusions and implications.
Table 5

Theoretical Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRAI Dimension</th>
<th>Themes Related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students believe in themselves and felt individual efforts and self-accountability lead to success.</td>
<td>Believed in themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You have a role in your success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Success is about self-accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students view success as a human, raceless character trait</td>
<td>Success is not a White thing; success is possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students possess a critical consciousness about racism and the challenges it presents to their present and future opportunities</td>
<td>Understood stereotypes of Black men; most wanted to defy those stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking for the entire race; President of Black people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black men were not expected to be successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students possess pragmatic attitudes about the value of schooling</td>
<td>Getting a good job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education was important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education was for their family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students value multicultural competence as a skill for success</td>
<td>Working with others is important; most likely very few Blacks in career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students develop practical adaptive strategies for overcoming racism in the school context</td>
<td>Selective response: Pick and choose how to respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tempering response: Monitor volume and not getting physical when facing racism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

Chapter III highlighted the parameters set forth that supported the methodology, as well as data collection, and data analysis. CRAI was used as the primary analytical tool with an overlay of CRT. Both theories informed the research design and analysis. The participants were selected from a single institution. After the participants were interviewed, they were all invited to participate in a focus group to discuss their experiences as a collective. Both data sets were used to determine the findings. Interviews of the selected participants were used to identify common themes and theoretical analysis.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The findings are presented to address the following research questions:

1. What types of parental engagement do Black male collegians attribute to their college success?
2. What is the participant’s perception of the role of race and racism in their own success and their parent’s contribution to it?
3. Which characteristics of traditional parent involvement did the Black male collegians recall their parent’s performing?

These questions were addressed through triangulating individual participant interviews with a subsequent focus group. The interviews and focus group analysis were centered on theoretical and thematic analysis. The CRAI theory was used to analyze the six dimensions of the ideologies that Carter (2008) concluded successful high achieving Black students possess. This researcher examined this theory through the stories and experiences of Black male collegians who graduated from college between December 2018 and December 2019. The participants grade point average ranged from minimally meeting the graduation requirements to far exceeding the requirements. Therefore, these stories explored Black male collegians success in college as reaching their senior year and on track for graduation within six years of entering college.
There are a total of six key findings. The first five findings are derived from a thematic analysis. The final finding is the analysis of participant stories through the theoretical framework of CRAI. Based upon thematic and theoretical analysis, an adaptation of CRAI was constructed based on the successful Black male collegians claims. This adaptation considered that this researcher sought to transfer Carter’s (2008) study on high achieving Black high school students to the collegiate context without using GPA as an indicator of success.

Table 6 highlights the six key findings and the research question they answer. The second research question was separated to focus on the two parts of the question. The part being answered is depicted in bold in Table 6.
Table 6

Key Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Thematic or Theoretical Finding(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1: What types of parental engagement do Black male collegians attribute to their college success?</td>
<td>Finding 1: Black parents provide sources of inspiration throughout the Black males’ lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding 2: Black parents ask questions about school throughout the Black males’ educational journey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 2a: What is the participant’s perception of the role of race and racism in their own success?</td>
<td>Finding 6: Dimensions of Critical Race Achievement Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding 5: Black male collegians’ success was centered on peer and role models support and an altruistic ideology of aspiration of their families and the collective Black community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 2b: What is the participant’s perception of the role of race and racism in their own success and their parent’s contribution to it?</td>
<td>Finding 1: Black parents provide sources of inspiration throughout the Black males’ lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding 4: Black parents presented a realistic depiction of being a Black male in society through messages of working twice as hard and persistence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding 5: Black male collegians’ success was centered on peer and role models support and an altruistic ideology of aspiration of their families and the collective Black community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 3: Which characteristics of traditional parent involvement did the Black male collegians recall their parents performing?</td>
<td>Finding 2: Black parents ask questions about school throughout the Black males’ educational journey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding 3: Education is salient for the Black parents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thematic Analysis

First, the five thematic findings are discussed. These findings are ordered in the number sequence listed in Table 6.

Finding 1: Parents as Sources of Inspiration

The first finding answers the first research question which was, “What types of parental engagement do Black male collegians attribute to their college success?” The first finding concluded that parents provided sources of inspiration throughout the Black males’ lives. The sources of inspiration that their parents provided were different but all can be summed up into this one finding. The Black male collegians comments follow.

Claude Roberts stated, “My dad… a lot…of what we did when I was really young, he would tell me stories either fact or fiction, but there were always stories involved.” When Claude was asked about the factors to his success; he stated, “A lot of factors that attribute to my success were one, my parents, obviously; the other, peer mentors that I had around me when I was growing up.”

Claude mentioned what many of the participants volunteered, that exposure and support were major contributors to their success. Further, he stated, “Having a good support system is one of the keys to be successful; you can’t be successful on your own. It just doesn't work that way.” Claude’s parents were an inspiration to him and their expectations motivated him. Claude said that “education growing up was always a priority in my house, wasn't really an option for me not to do well in school.”
Another participant, Aaron Williams, shared similar sentiments. Aaron stated:

I'm a first-generation college student. So, my parents really...was on me trying to make sure I go to class, do my work...they gave me a push to do what I'm supposed to do as far as making sure I do good in class and study and do my stuff. So...they have...a huge part.

Moreover, Aaron continued:

Like elementary school, I used to be...a class clown. They didn't really put up with that. So, going into high school, I had to turn a new leaf and that's when I started getting more serious...I actually got honors classes and...realizing that I'm not just some goofy kid. I was somebody who can actually do the work, and put the time in and put the effort in to be successful. So, once they [his parents] kind of pushed me to...stop goofing around...knew that I could actually be successful if I just applied myself. They...helped me get through that.

Aaron also shared that he recalled the messages about the importance of school, and his parents as sources of inspiration began early. Aaron stated:

My parents putting that [the importance of education] on me; and, also my grandmother; she used to call me Little Professor...growing up. So...she wanted me to...be good in school. She didn’t play either; she was on my back.... They didn’t want me to slack off. They wanted me to do good...ever since middle
school and high school, that's when people kept telling me like I'm more than just goofing off.

Aaron continued by saying, “Ever since I was in high school…my parents knew I was going to college; they would be encouraging me and expecting me to graduate.” Moreover, Aaron specifically spoke about the way his father encouraged him and provided him with a source of inspiration. Aaron stated:

My dad was probably the one that I went to the most because I looked up to him, and I thought he was really smart. So, I always ask him for help.…He would just encourage me to think more about the subject as far as any homework or classwork.

Cavaughn Curry shared similar examples of the way his mother encouraged and inspired him throughout life. Cavaughn noted:

So yeah, growing up it was…always, “You have…so much potential;” or, “Your son has so much potential and could do so much.” “He’s such a bright kid, but…he's hyper, he doesn't…necessarily know what direction to go in.” And, you know…my mom…every time she would go in there and she would listen to those…teachers tell her that and she would sit there and be like, “Yeah, I noticed, and I tell him that all the time” and then would…come home and…really stressed it to me.… “This is going to be something that can really hold you back…. People can see that you have potential, but…you're not…walking into it. You
allow…what's going on around you to distract you from what really is.” Hearing those words early on or hearing messages similar to that early on as a kid… it has shaped me to be more aware of my surroundings. There is nothing in this world that can stop you from doing what you want to do. My mom…wasn't always vocal about that. It wasn't…always apparent. It was like I had to see. I had to pay attention to what my mom did.

Her motivation came…a lot of times through…constructive criticism…her perseverance to…have…raised me as a Black man in this world; her perseverance…to have multiple jobs, trying to keep a [roof] over my head, her waking up every morning at 6:00 a.m. to prepare breakfast and to send me off to school, or not even send me off to school, but to get up and get ready for work herself before I was to leave for school myself. And all of that…just gave me a drive…just inspired me to just continue to do what it is I'm set out here to do, but to do it and give it my all…because I seen my mom do it for some 20 plus years now. You know?

Cavaughn continued with a profound statement. Cavaughn said, “She is a constant inspiration. So, her worth is…such an inspiration to everything I do, and it’s crazy.”

Jerome Sampson shared moments when his mother, sister, and late father provided inspiration. Jerome said:
My father used to cut out...articles from newspapers...that probably stand [stood] out to him that he wanted me to read...Articles would consist of highly successful Black men like around the community that are doing something. He’ll cut them out and...tape them on my door and I’ll wake up and I’ll open my door...there will be...three, four articles of just...successful people around the community, like mayors getting elected...saying to me that this could be me too.

Jon Robinson recalled that his mother provided him with inspiration through an exposure to her professional friends. Jon stated:

Yeah. So, my mother...one of the biggest things is...her friends are all successful African Americans. One of them has a Ph.D., another one is the engineer who also has a law degree. Another one is a head faculty member at a university.

Jon’s mother also provided similar sources of inspiration. Jon recalled, “We also grow up...very religious. So, my mother would read...Bible scriptures...I think until I was able to begin [reading myself].

Lastly, the final participant, Raymon Crawford, shared that his mother provided him with inspiration and motivation as well. Raymon stated:

My mother...her highest education was high school. I'm actually doing something that she never did...her main message, with a lot of things in life...with a lot of our own decisions, was to do what's best for you. Put God first and...just do something [positive]!
Raymon further shared how his mother provided inspiration through church and religion. Raymon commented:

She always told us…if you are stressed or if you just need someone to talk to…definitely…turn towards God. I grew up in the church. So that was the main message… give it to God, all the glory and just do what's best for you.

Additionally, Raymon indicated that his mother was a big source of inspiration. Raymon recalled:

Just the way she carried herself…the fact that she will do anything for anybody, giving her last and I know she never really had nothing…she was just so energized, so energetic for other people. Not…have nothing, [it] really kind of…made me want to do more because she deserved more. Many conversations that we had about just staying strong and just making sure that you're…okay and giving back [to others and the community].

The parents of the Black males provided them with different sources of inspiration. One of those ways was through the phrases and messages that parents would send. In the focus group, when the participants were asked for a phrase that their parents shared that provided them motivation, they shared the following examples.

Aaron’s parents repeated, “You’re almost done!”

Jerome’s mother and sister enthusiastically reiterated, “You didn’t come this far for nothing!”
Cavaughn’s mother encouraged him by saying, “Keep pushing! Keep working!” Furthermore, Cavaughn mentioned about his mother still checking up on his grades in college. He further stated, “That's sort of the expectation that you should have from your parents because ultimately they're your biggest support system and they care the most.”

Raymon’s mother inspired him by saying, “Stay in tune with God!”

Jon’s mother reinforced him to persist through what he referred to as “fear.” Jon recalled his mother saying, “You don’t want to end up a bum.” She also supported him by occasionally reminding him that “anything is possible through Christ Jesus.”

Claude’s parents cheered and reassured him by stating, “Getting your degree is something that a lot of people in the family didn’t accomplish, so you should be very proud of yourself.” Claude’s parents also said, “The hard work that you’re putting in will pay off one day.”

Although this researcher did not directly ask any questions about how the participants’ parents provided sources of inspiration in the individual interviews, this theme repeatedly emerged. Therefore, participants shared phrases that parents recited to them, while in college, and one phrase that sums up how their parents contributed to their college success. The participants told stories that included vivid memories of the way their parents provided them with a source of inspiration either directly themselves or through exposure to their friends or church.
Finding 2: Parents Asked Questions

The second finding identified another emergent theme. Consistently in each participant’s story, there was a cogent commonality among each participant regardless of socioeconomic status or parental demographics. Black parents asked questions about school throughout each Black male’s educational journey. Simply asking questions of the Black males, they said, made a difference in their ability to succeed in college. Examples from the participants are included in the subsequent paragraphs.

This finding also answered the first research question, “What types of parental engagement do Black male collegians attribute to their college success?” This finding also responds to the third research question, “Which characteristics of traditional parent involvement did the Black male collegians recall their parent’s performing?” Many of the parents of the successful Black male collegians asked their sons questions about their future, school, and their academic performance throughout their lives. Cavaughn indicated this fact very well when discussing his mother’s expectations for him to attend college. Cavaughn shared some of his mother’s “just checking in” remarks, “Oh, you…thinking about school? Start doing what you need to do because I know people bout to start going to school pretty soon. I haven't been hearing too much about [college]…. So, what you got going on?”

Aaron had a similar experience and remarked that the questions were exactly what he needed. Aaron stated:
But, I feel like them constantly making sure I'm okay and making sure that everything with me is alright. That's not what I necessarily want all the time, but that's what I need...somebody...checking up on me, make sure I'm doing my stuff. That is what they're here for...to help with support...all the time. I feel like that is really important for me.

Aaron commented on how asking questions helped him. He recalled parents’ and family members’ inquiring, “People always ask me when I'm graduating. And actually what I'm doing after college. And how can I use my degree once I graduate.

Claude elaborated on his parents asking him questions as being vital to his success. Claude said:

Even though I was an adult, they still checked up to make sure I was doing my work, to make sure I was turning in my work on time. My mom still checked up on my grades, all the way through college, like I was still in middle school or in high school.

Jon mentioned that his mother asked, “‘How’s school/classes going? You need anything?’” Jon said that his mother’s questions were “some of the most motivating questions that assisted in persistence.”

**Finding 3: Education is Salient**

In almost every instance, each of the participants indicated how education was a salient value for them while growing up. This theme surfaced in many different ways as
each of the participants had a different demographic of who they considered to be their parental figure and their parents’ education backgrounds differed; it was apparent that their parents’ display of educational salience also differed. This led to the theme of the salience of education in the family.

Jon provided some insight with his response regarding his parent’s emphasis on the importance of education. Jon stated:

Yeah. So, growing up, education was a big factor in our household. My father is an elementary school teacher; and when my parents were together…there was a big focus on…taking that [education] seriously. We always had to read outside the classroom… for my mother, the focus is education. So, we were always working on stuff, whether it was inside or outside the classroom, being part of…Summer Reading Programs or Hooked on Phonics, just to make sure that we're always prepared.

Jon continued by describing how this value, early on in life, translated into the importance of a college education. Jon indicated, “There's nothing more important than a college education to me, personally…it prepares you for whatever…you want to do in life.” Additionally, Jon shared his recollection of education being emphasized, from a very early age, and reiterated about when he and his siblings were not taking school seriously. Jon stated:
We always knew…that college was kind of like a mandatory thing in our house, but I would say during…mid-high school, my parents divorced…it was kind of like a rough patch for us because we went from…my father who makes good money to a situation where we are in…an unstable living condition. Our mother started to see that we weren't…taking school seriously, our grades were starting to drop, we were maybe acting out a little more just because of all the circumstances we were in. Our mother pretty much…portrayed to us…you know these type of habits can lead to us…not being successful long term…also lead to us not being able to get into the college. We will maybe not get the scholarships that we want for college to be able to pay for college was probably…the biggest thing that she…mentioned to us.

Education was salient for Claude’s parents as well from a very early age of his education. Claude stated:

Education growing up was always a priority in my house. [It] wasn't really an option for me not to do well in school. So, they always put a big emphasis on me doing well in school…always pushing myself, and that just translated into high school and later on into college. Going to college was always a thing that I was going to do, it wasn't really an option for me.

Claude continued to share how his older sister going to college increased the messaging for performing well. Claude stated:
My sister went to college when I was in middle school. So, that's when it really started to get pushed...on me, when she went to college. Basically, my parents were saying this is what needs to be done and it's not hard to obtain but it's just going to take a lot of hard work.

Aaron also stated that education was valued while he was growing up. Aaron specifically recalled:

Growing up, school...I really enjoyed...some of the classes I was taking and just having a support system that encouraged me to be in school and do my work and be on top of most of it. So, coming into college that played a huge part in my having a support system by gaining people that wanted me to do it. So, I just kept doing what I could to be on top, my academics.

Aaron continued:

I'm a first-generation college student. So, my parents really...was on me trying to make sure I go to class...do my work.... My dad was my football coach...very active in all sports me and my brother played. My mom was a coach for a dance team. They became more known at the school than I was. They volunteered a lot in the school as well.

Jerome provided insight into the appreciation and value for education throughout his life. Jerome stated:
I enjoyed it, uh, in a few ways actually because looking back on it…in middle school and high school, I like, it was different aspects that helped me value it. I say elementary school…you really learn the values of the school that can help you in life. And as you get older, in middle school you see, um, how more it can help you, you know, you get in high school and then once you start preparing for college, you really get the emphasis of how far education can take you…I know my mother and sister really placed that on me early on how important education is…and how far [education] actually get you in the world.

Education was also a priority in Jerome’s house, rather than having fun. Jerome mentioned that his mother enforced doing homework before doing anything else. Jerome shared:

I wouldn't say like I had a specific…dedicated time [for reading]. My mother [would ask], “Did you do your homework?” before you [could] go outside. And I had to show her that I did it, but I won't say that it was a specific set time…. But, I know that if I wanted to go outside, I had to get that homework done.

As the only college athlete and aspiring professional player, Jerome provided a perspective on how his parents impressed the importance of education in addition to athletics. Jerome commented:

A college education is very important because when I was younger…I'm pretty sure like most boys do, they kinda have…dreams of being in the NFL or NBA.
That was one of my dreams and my mother and sister were really hammering on me that everybody don't make, everybody's not going to make it. But of course, being younger, you going be like, “I don't want to hear that.” [He kept telling himself] “I'm gonna make it! I'm gonna make it!” But then once you get older and realize…they were right, everybody don't make it…and you don’t have nothing to fall back on. So, that really played into…you need a college education to fall back on. But if you don't make it, then you just out of luck, you know what I'm saying? So I really value a college education because, um, I'm not going to the NFL or NBA, so I'm glad that I've got that college degree to fall back on.

Jerome also recalled college being introduced early through his love for sports with the understanding that college was the only way to make it to the professional leagues. Jerome shared:

I want to say maybe around seven or eight, probably once I started paying attention to college sports. Uh, that my uncle and my father would explain to me like what what, what college was because I didn't know exactly what it was at the time today, but Oh, this is college, you know, you go there before you possible could get to the NFL or NBA, and they really explain it to me like you need to go here too. You can get an Associates and get a bachelor's, doctorate, a master's you have to do it to further better yourself in life.
Jerome noted that the expectations from his parents for college were education through athletics; but once he stopped playing, the focus remained on education. Jerome remarked:

When I first started going to college, I was an athlete, so I would say maybe that expectation was tied to being on the field at first. But once I stopped playing…their expectations just shifted to more so the education side, getting a bachelor’s and then hopefully the master’s eventually once I get to that point. So, I would say that was the expectation at first and then now it's more so geared toward the education side.

Raymon shared that his mother did not perform some of the noted parent-involvement tactics. According to Raymon, although his mother did not graduate from high school, she shared the importance of education for the purpose of having a better life. Raymon stated:

My mother, she, her highest education was high school. I'm actually…doing something that she never did. So her main message, with a lot of things in life…with a lot of our own decisions was to do what's best for you…My mother…she dropped out of high school, so…she couldn't necessarily help me [with] a lot of things. So it was a struggle for her too…. But she told me, “it won’t be easy.”
When [it] got to a certain point where it was kind of like I could do it on my own, so I didn't necessarily need her. So like when it came to like art projects or something like that, she was definitely there for me. I think that’s more of the creative aspect. But like any other schoolwork, I really handled it on my own. And I really probably did it before I even got home, so earlier that day. I was capable of doing it by myself.

**Informal education: Reading.** A subtheme of defining education informally emerged in questions about reading and books.

Claude explained how books and reading were a part of the educational salience. Claude revealed:

Yeah, there was shelves of books. Sometimes, there were books for them specifically but there are always some kids’ books that they would read to me and also in school. Growing up, there was a program called 100 Book Challenge, where you had to read 100 books. I believe it was per quarter.

Although, Aaron’s parents were involved in his schooling and always pushed him to do well, they neither read to him nor did they have a lot of books. Aaron recalled, “If anything, my dad helped me with my homework. They helped me…with my studies and stuff, but we didn't really have that time like really reading books to each other.”

Cavaughn shared that his mother cared about his education and wanted him to do well, but reading was not stressed. Cavaughn indicated:
I fell into that Latch Key kid situation, where it was like my mom left before I went to school and...she came home after I came home type of situation... We wouldn’t read together per se, it was like, “You have homework?” or, “You get the homework done?”

Cavaughn added that books were available in the household and he observed his mother reading books when he was growing up. Cavaughn recalled:

So growing up...we did have books in my household, but um, after getting Harry Potter for Christmas, it was just like, it kind of slowed down when I was younger...my mom had kind of started reading. She was really into, like, authors like Toni Morrison. I know that was really popular when I was younger, like 10 years old, you know.

Before passing away, Jerome’s late father emphasized reading and introduced Jerome to his favorite book. Jerome indicated:

My father was big on books. I still have a wide range of books that I still...like going through. I know when I was maybe around 13, 14, [he] gave me the Malcolm X...Biography [The Autobiography of Malcolm X], which I read. Looking back on it, I was, I was 13, 14 reading that, which is crazy. But yeah, there are definitely books in the house. My sister also kept a lot of books. My father would give my sister a lot of books to read.
For Raymon there were some things that his mother did read to him that helped him with his homework in some ways. Raymon stated:

My mother, she did… read the Bible…she did have us read the Bible like growing up and [she would] have…little services within the house, but…reading to me [other books], she didn't do that…Growing up, yes…she did help with…my math homework.

Raymon continued by adding that there were books in the house and he had a regular routine that kept him on task. Raymon shared:

There were…books in the house but my mother…didn't force us to read anything. But also in middle school, I probably didn't say I played sports and stuff like that too, as well. So…right after school, [Raymon would] go straight [to] sports. So, by that time after sports, it’s come back home, shower, eat, do your homework, and then go to sleep.

All of the participants spoke to how important education was in their household and emphasized by their parents in many different ways. In some ways, traditional methods were engaged such as dedicating reading time, encouraging reading books, and being involved in their school. However, in other instances, the salience of education was displayed in different manners. Much of this display was in messages that the Black male collegians’ parents shared along the way that made a difference to them in the long term.
Finding 4: Working Twice as Hard

This researcher did not explicitly ask any questions about how participants’ parents depicted messages of thriving in this world as a Black man. However, there were many indications throughout the interviews that the Black male collegians commented on about how they were told to achieve in society, that they had to work twice as hard. The following emergent theme arose in several ways. Black parents presented a realistic depiction of being a Black male in society through messages of working twice as hard and persistence.

The participants provided responses that showcased a positive sense of self as a Black man. Jerome proclaimed that he was “strong, uplifting, smart, role model, and leader.” Aaron declared that he was “creative, nice, helpful, and strong.” Claude pronounced that he was “self-driven, smart, hardworking, and versatile.” Cavaughn asserted that he was “leader, clear, prosperous, student, growth-minded, and underrated.” Raymon affirmed that he was “strong-minded, strong-willed, faithful, loving, caring, independent, but a student of life, not the average, passionate, and for others [servant].” And Jon avowed that he was “strong, leader, will-powered, and powerful.”

The participants also indicated that they had developed a strong realistic depiction of self and were aware at an early age that they were judged differently. Examples of related comments follow.
Raymon shared:

I always got to do more. I know that because...I know my value. I started off in the end in a ditch, but...I can't let that define...who I am. I have to work hard...just as hard as the next man...no I have to work twice as hard as the next man...because...had a slow start. So, I don't really look into that all the time, but...I am aware that I am a Black male in society and I have to do more to even be considered to be good to the next person.

Jon shared another perspective that he learned about working twice as hard to get ahead. Jon stated:

During high school, I didn't take school that seriously and then for me to put all that hard work in and to think it paid off and...it don't pay off. It's kind of like a mental battle I had to go through for a while.

Furthermore, Jon, who grew up in a suburb, explained how his mother shared with him how he had to work a little harder than his friends. Jon said:

So the biggest thing was my mom didn't want me to end up in a position like her. She wanted us to kind of have a better life and kind of realize that education was a way to get out of the circumstance that we were in how we were brought up....She...[would] talk about...the things that we don't have and looking at...just a difference in how we grew up compared to, you...a lot of my friends, who had parents that went to college. Having a degree is...how life could be different just
based off of having an education and going to college. She also thought that...[with] the way that the world's going right now, there's no other way to really be successful, except for if you have education.

Cavaughn spoke about how he has tried to maintain a positive outlook while understanding early on that Black men in this society have to be mindful of their interactions with police and how they respond. Cavaughn noted:

I think this is something that a lot of Black males could attest to...we live our lives to stay out of the way [of] the police and to stay out of the way of our oppressors, however its shaped.... We...have to do what we have to do to get by, but we just stay out of the way. And for some reason...we still encounter them more times than not, you know. Uh, so for myself, I understand that. Well, I try, I try my best to just kind of stay out of the way...I got to make sure I'm not...play[ing] my music too loud. Like I would make sure I’m not doing anything out of the ordinary at certain times in the neighborhood. Like, a girl right around where I lived...was sexually assaulted in my neighborhood...in a walkway right through my neighborhood...I choose not to walk that way because police sit there. They just watching...and they watching....“You feel me?”

Cavaughn continued by sharing that being better is a common goal of Black people, but you have to be at your best because society is waiting for the moment that you are not. Cavaughn stated:
It’s systemic out here, the evils in the oppressors that they have in place to stop us from getting... that's the thing, like all we want to do is make it to be better than where we are today. I feel like that is, that is the common goal of all Black people is to make it...make headway for another day...I can’t do this because there's somebody out there looking for me. It’s somebody out there waiting on me to make the wrong turn. Somebody waiting on me to not turn on my blinker, somebody waiting on me to walk down the street with a hood on...say I was reaching for a gun.... Somebody...waiting on me. If somebody [is] out there waiting on me...I can’t be myself because somebody who wanted me to be, you want me to be what they know me to be...You know, I can’t be me if you, if you expected me to be this. Black men on a daily, we deal with somebody having a viewpoint of us and surprisingly like it’s there...surprised to see me at college. You’re surprised to see me in college and be able to speak the way I speak.

In the focus group, Cavaughn shared that working twice as hard through education was vital. Cavaughn stated:

Education is key, it's key. And I just remember [my mother being] straight to the point... “You got to go to school...you need to go to school.” College is a must.... I remember people say like that high school diploma doesn’t mean much, like you got to have something after that. Like now they tell us...the bachelor's
don’t really mean much. You know what I’m saying? You got to have more than that. So, we go, we just got to continue to strive to be equal. You feel me?”

Claude indicated that his parents encouraged him to work hard and to demonstrate that he was just as capable as the other students. Claude recalled:

Basically my parents were saying this is what needs to be done and it's not hard to obtain but it's just going to take a lot of hard work…they [Claude’s parents] gave me the extra push a lot of the times in my classes I might have been the only Black individual, let alone the Black male. So, that was a big thing for me to do well in those courses to show that I'm capable and I'm going to get my degree, just like everyone else can.

During the focus group, Claude further stated:

My parents were basically always stressing the fact that having an education, being Black, is very important because being Black you already have to work twice as hard in American, or anywhere, to get where you want to go in life. So, they stressed…just being educated…at all times is key.

Aaron did not exactly share very much related to this theme of working twice as hard. However, he did mention that his parents pushed him to go into a field that would be lucrative for him in society, which pushed him to persist. Aaron indicated:
My parents would talk to me about how Black nurses are needed since I want to be…I want to get into nursing…They will be like, “Oh yeah, you should get into nursing ‘cause they need Black male nurses.”

Black parents provided a realistic depiction of how Black males are treated in society and how their sons must navigate the world acknowledging that they are Black men. Being a Black man comes with its challenges and societal pressures, but there are careers in which being a Black male could be beneficial. Depending on how the Black male grew up, their parents made them aware of their realities compared to that of their White and sometimes just wealthier friends. The bottom line that Black males must work harder given the historical and systematic challenges of being a Black male in America as was interwoven throughout their conversations about education.

**Finding 5: Peer and Role Models and an Altruistic Ideology of Aspiration**

Education and school for Black males are viewed as notably important. Carter (2008) asserted that education is viewed as a “vehicle for social and economic mobility” (p. 486). The successful Black male collegian participants also viewed education in this way. In addition to education as a means for social and economic advancement, the Black males viewed their education as an apparatus for collectively progressing the social conditions of the Black community. Largely, there was a belief that their education was not solely for themselves and they each had a responsibility to be conscious of their
actions and its impact on the collective. This is exemplified in the following selected remarks.

Jon shared:

Education was a big factor in our household...there was a big focus on, you know, taking that seriously...I think there's nothing more important than a college education to me, personally. Just because a college education is more than just...education from...a school standpoint, I think it's more of a maturation of a person just from learning how to interact with professionals, learning how to...make your own decisions...it prepares you for whatever...you want to do in life. I think for me it definitely gave me purpose, gave me ideas to think about, you know what I can do to be part of something bigger than myself.

Jerome shared a similar message. Jerome stated:

Once you start preparing for college, you really get the emphasis of how far education can take you... and how far [education] actually gets you in the world...A college education is very important because when I was younger... [he had] dreams of being in the NFL or NBA. That was one of my dreams and my mother and sister were really hammering on me that...everybody's not going to make it. But of course, being younger, you...be like, I don't want to hear that....[He kept telling himself], “I'm gonna make it! I’m gonna make it!” But then once you get older and realized that they were right, everybody don't make it....So, I
really value a college education because…I'm not going to the NFL or NBA, so I'm glad that I've got that college degree to fall back on.

Jerome further recalled how college was introduced to him as a place to go to “get an associate’s…a bachelor's, doctorate’s, a master's; you have to do it to further better yourself in life.... I knew school was important but never [not] how far it could take me til' [I] got older.

Raymon credited his persistence towards success as having a greater purpose. Raymon stated:

I’m not doing it for recognition. But, just to prove to statistics and prove to society that I can be what I want to be and that’s not being a drug dealer or that’s not being someone who was into sports. I like that and I want to do something different. I can do it!

Cavaughn shared that college was a challenge. However, his mother’s support throughout the process has made him successful and his future success will be used to help her. Cavaughn remarked:

Financially has been a crazy…challenge that came with being in college. But, she [his mother] understood that and she signed up and she’s been rocking with me since…since the beginning. So, I’m definitely looking forward to paying it back, you know, and do my part to look out for her once it’s my turn.
The participants were asked to discuss their thoughts on the importance of a college education. Responses follow.

Raymon indicated:
Just being in college is very important, very…important…the more you experience college, the more you will…find out that it's very important…it [college] just opened up the opportunity, open the doors to things you will never ever have. So I take it as a life lesson. So college is very, very important. I kind of feel like they say everybody should get the experience of going to college. College might not be for everybody but the experience and like just the life and being around people, gaining mentors, and stuff like that has been beneficial.

Claude agreed and provided the following response:
To me personally, a college education is really important, especially in today’s age. There’s so much to learn, you can always learn something new. So, a college education not only gives you the information, but it teaches you how to receive the information and retain it.

Cavaughn shared:
The college education is important. I think the knowledge that you learn within class is less important than the experience you may go through while you’re on campus…. The experiences you have with other people in other demographics…or other races may enlighten your mind too…so much more than
sitting in front of the whiteboard and watching the teacher put up notes. But those
discussions that we have here on campus, within those classrooms as well, allow
us to open our minds up and leave those rooms some days and just be like, “Wow,
I wonder why it's this way?” Then again, those experiences that may not be in the
classroom, but they're in…a formal setting when you have a keynote speaker
come in and it's almost like they're talking directly to you, you know. So, some of
these things…the opportunities that arise when you come to a[n] institution, a
college institution…is bountiful, I will say.

Aaron mentioned that he is enjoying the learning in college. Aaron shared:
It's very important when I know how people always ask me when I'm graduating
and actually what I'm doing after college and how I can use my degree so once I
graduate. So, I learn a lot in a school…like not only from classes but the people
around me. So, being in college and the experience is definitely being really good
for me and I personally enjoy it.

Jon added a similar note:
I think there's nothing more important than a college education to me, personally.
Just because a college education is more than…like education from…a school
standpoint. I think it's more of a maturation of a person just from learning how to
interact with professionals, learning how to kind of make your own decisions,
from [a] national schooling standpoint, you know it prepares you for
whatever…you want to do in life. I think for me it definitely gave me purpose, gave me ideas to think about, you know what I can do to be part of something bigger than myself.

In the end, participants believed that the value of schooling was both pragmatic and realistic with the views of society. The participants largely viewed education as the apparatus for joining an elevated social-class status. The participants’ college education success was supported through the desire to succeed to attain greatness for more than themselves. Education for the participants was not only about elevating themselves, but it was also about giving back to their community and family.

The participants discussed a desire for a community of support inclusive of family, faculty, staff, and peers. These relationships were connected to their success. Strayhorn (2008) reported that a supportive relationship for Black males facilitates greater satisfaction but not necessarily academic achievement as measured by GPA. Success for the Black male participants was postulated as their ability to persist to their final semesters and/or graduate. Moreover, they described their community of support as being broader and deeper than those found in previous studies. In fact, their entire education, success, and aspirations were dedicated to it.

Aaron was a prime example of a participant who acknowledged community support, especially from family and peers. Aaron commented:
Just having a support system that encouraged me to be in school and do my work and be on top of most of it, so coming into college that played a huge part in my having a support system by gaining people that wanted me to do it. So, I just kept doing what I could to be on top [of] my academics…. Coming into [college], I had friends around me and when they left, I didn’t know what to do, but I didn’t really think about dropping out. I was just more so like, “How am I going to continue without them being so close to me?” So, I kinda was really to myself after that. But coming into my junior, senior year, I started meeting more people and that kind of just motivated me to keep going and finish strong.

Raymon regarded the support from his mother as essential for his success. Raymon noted:

It’s just…being there. Just always reminded me of it [going to college and progressing]. It’s not going to be easy and I’m doing things that people will look up to…so it’s kind of like her being in my corner. Her being there. So, I just want to thank my mom for just being there and being…consistently the same person.

Jon also considered the support from his mother connecting him to the right community of support as critical. Jon commented:

I think…the one thing is my mom always made sure I was in the right circles… I…went from a two-parent to a one-parent household. My father wasn’t really
around...the fact my mom made sure I was around people that wanted to be successful was a very big impact.

Jerome mentioned how his mother...was helpful and how transferring to a college where he felt he had a community that cared helped him. Jerome remarked:

Once I transferred closer to home...my mom...still checks up on me...she’s still calling me every day just to make sure I’m...not doing nothing crazy. Just keeping a good head on my shoulders. This school really put it in your perspective that there’s people here that really care about your future. I wouldn’t say they [Jerome’s previous institution] didn’t care, but the coaches at the other school was really just pushing sports. Like though they say student athlete. I mean, if you want to be for real, it’s really athlete student, if you want to be serious...just coming here and...seeing that it’s people that really care about the education part.

Claude echoed Aaron’s sentiments about the importance of his parents and the support system at college was pivotal for his success. Claude said:

My parents just being that support system that I needed to get where I’m at now. I personally don’t think without a support system in college, it would be kind of hard because having people around you that encourage you and support you, will take you far.
Cavaughn mentioned that his mom’s support kept him on track. Cavaughn noted:

Thinking about my mom, she’s supportive and in college, like a lot of these guys just said, mom call[ed] you every day…be calling every day just to make sure you [are] still on that track…to success, to graduation.

During focus group, the participants were also asked to describe the type of community that they were seeking in college. Examples from the participants are included in the following paragraphs.

Jon indicated that he “was looking to connect with like-minded Black people especially males because the brotherhood is special. Also, there’s a sense that you’re part of something bigger than yourself.”

Claude provided the following response, “People I can relate with. Examples would be the same major, life goals, sports, music, etc.”

Aaron responded, “People who had goals, drive, ambition. I wanted to find people who could help me as much as I could help them. People who wanted to do great things and help others along the way.”

Jerome sought a community of support with shared similarities. Jerome indicated that he “was looking to connect with like-minded people, that shared similar thoughts.”

Raymon responded with a description of the community of support that he had throughout college. Raymon indicated, “My community that I was involved with while
in college consists of progressive individuals who want more for themselves; TRIO, SSS, my fraternity, my mentor. I just wanted to be around positive people.

Cavaughn wrote that he actively sought support where he could be an addition. Cavaughn remarked, “When I first applied to Nelson-Boston University, I had been following a couple people and different orgs [student organizations] on social media. Once I saw they were getting to it, I had to come and offer my creativity too.”

The Black male participants sought communities of support where they felt welcomed and could actively contribute. Their circle of support included family, peers, faculty, and staff. Moreover, they sought supportive relationships to facilitate their success. Many participants presumed that they could succeed if they were aware of others who cared and they were encouraged by them throughout the journey. They also viewed their education and success as an investment into making their communities greater and defying the stereotypes.

**Finding 6: Critical Race Achievement Ideology**

Carter (2008) posited Critical Race Achievement Ideology (CRAI) to center on the beliefs and perceptions that high achieving Black students held, which contributed to their success. Additionally, CRAI promotes the critical factors that students employ to combat racism and other barriers to success. This theoretical approach is the analytical tool employed to analyze the successful Black male collegians’ narratives. The thematic analysis and findings focused entirely on the parents; however, the theoretical findings
are focused on the ideologies that the successful Black male collegians utilized to persist to graduation through all obstacles. CRAI acknowledges that achievement and race are not independent, but interrelated (Carter, 2008).

The six dimensions of CRAI situated the students and their beliefs as the impetus for their success. The dimensions are as follows:

1. Students believe in themselves and feel that individual efforts and self-accountability lead to school success.

2. Students view achievement as a human, raceless character trait embedded in their sense of self as a racial being.

3. Students possess a critical consciousness about racism and the challenges it presents to their present and future opportunities as well as other members of their racial group.

4. Students possess a pragmatic attitude about the value of schooling for their future.

5. Students value multicultural competence as a skill for success.

6. Students develop adaptive strategies for overcoming racism in the school context that allow them to maintain high academic achievement and strong racial/ethnic self-definitions.

CRAI was based on an analysis of high achieving Black students in the secondary school context (Carter, 2008). This researcher extended its use to a collegiate context,
which slightly modifies some dimensions located in finding five. This researcher also extended one dimension further and added an additional element discussed further in finding six, which together formed the reconceptualization Critical Race Aspiration Ethos (CRAE). CRAE framed the expressed beliefs and actions of the Black male collegians that their success was a means of cultivating a critical altruistic benefit for the collective race. The subsequent sections outline the findings related to CRAI and the final finding elaborates on CRAE.

**CRAI Dimension 1.** Students believe in themselves and feel that individual efforts and self-accountability lead to school success. Carter (2008) discussed how the individual student’s beliefs that their own efforts and self-accountability are factors in their high achievement in school. Carter (2008) posited that “possessing a sense of self as an achiever and internalizing the concept of hard work and individual effort are two character traits necessary to sustain school success” (p. 479). Moreover, Carter discussed how students value the effort that they put into their work and take ownership for their success and failures as critical factors in a student’s attitude for succeeding.

This dimension of CRAI emerged among the successful Black male collegians. Each of the young men expressed thoughts in their abilities or held positive thoughts about themselves. More concertedly, throughout their interviews, the Black male collegians owned the fact that they had to persevere and hold themselves to a higher standard in order to succeed.
Additionally, each of the participants was given one minute to free write to the following question, “How important was believing in yourself and self-accountability to your school success?” Following are participants’ written responses.

Raymon, “I believe that believing in yourself is the only way to fully grasp the understanding of who you are. You must believe in yourself because no one will.”

Jerome, “It was very important because I had to believe in myself if I was going to be successful.”

Aaron, “I always tried to believe I could do better because I was surrounded by people who wanted me to do better. They put trust in me so that helped me become more confident in what I could do.”

Claude, “I always set high expectations for myself, so believing in myself gave me the extra boost I needed to be successful.”

Cavaughn, “During school, my mom pushed me to do more. Whether that be putting in more study hours, to get better grades, go to practice, whatever. But, it was my will and determination along with many prayers to get there!”

Jon was the only participant who countered this belief. However, he was still successful and was scheduled to graduate a few months after the interview. Jon wrote:

I think from K-12, I just got by and never tried…I had the confidence but didn’t show it. In college, I lost it because school was harder--trying to balance it. I think I lost a lot of my confidence. My confidence was always there… I can
decide to show it. It was more if I wanted to show the confidence or not. I always believed in myself, internally.

Jon’s response did not fully answer the question. However, it was apparent from the response that he felt that he was able to be successful even if he did not display his confidence. Jon also demonstrated in his response that even when he did not externally display his confidence, the internal belief in his abilities was always there. Jon’s other responses showcased that he did in fact work hard in school but may not have worked as hard as he could have worked.

**CRAI Dimension 2.** Students view achievement as a human, raceless character trait embedded in their sense of self as a racial being. Carter (2008) noted that Black achievers held a contrary view and did not express beliefs that achieving in school was something only for White Americans. In fact, success was seen as a human reality not based upon racial identity whatsoever. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) earlier contended that Black students viewed school success as “acting White.” The participants in this dissertation shared these same beliefs. In fact, one part of their ethos for success and aspirations for themselves, their families, and their communities was to be convinced that success was the only option. Success as a raceless character trait was a strong part of the Black male collegians’ self-efficacy.

The participants demonstrated this throughout their interviews but most prevalently through the focus group. Some of their remarks follow.
Jerome shared:

I definitely heard the term speaking White or Acting White when people don’t think you are a Black person, when they think you sound proper. “Are you just talking White? Acting White?” I got that…a lot growing up, but I didn’t think success was just a White thing because I seen a lot of people, growing up in my neighborhood, was…successful, but a lot of it came from sports, but I seen it.

Claude added:

Some might get the perception that talking a certain way or talking “White” would mean that you are successful. I heard that a lot growing up…coming up from other people, not people that I knew exactly. But, in society it might be perceived that most successful people are White when now that’s not really the case. It’s changing…there’s a lot of Black successful people that we could relate to.

Similarly, Aaron held beliefs that all persons could succeed regardless of race.

Aaron indicated:

Kind of seeing where people thought you would end up based on your skin color, I’ve seen that as far as people expect you to be locked up in jail or something like that if you were Black…rather than…being in business. I’ve heard stuff like that. I didn't know people didn't think you could be successful. Right? Because a lot of people I knew were Black people that had their own business or…were
doctors…nurses and stuff like that. So, I didn’t really think it was a White thing but people would say stuff like, I’m “talking White or acting White.” But…the stereotypes where…Black men end up or you can only be successful, like Jerome said, through sports or some type of entertainment like rap. I didn't hold success as a White thing!

Cavaughn expressed thoughts that success was possible. Cavaughn noted these beliefs in the following comments:

Oh, growing up, success was…I don’t think success is a White thing. I think it was…it’s two standards to it though, growing up. So, it was successful Black folks and its successful White folks, successful Black folks, you got more options that’s going to lead you to jail, death, you know what I’m saying? Then successful White folks who can get a lot more legal hustles and a lot more ways to…put other people in position to take other people out of position. Right? But, it’s still a legal way that line they pockets.

When you were walking to school in my neighborhood and you didn’t see…too many Black owned businesses though. You might see…the BBQ spot, it’s other ethnicities that came into my neighborhood and owned it and corner stores, gas stations…laundry mats. Success wasn’t a White thing. It was just, success is different for my people.
Jon contended that his mother instilled in him that success was directly connected with the manner you presented yourself in public. Jon remarked:

One thing my mom taught me from...a young age is that you’re not acting White. You’re just acting proper. My mom used to pop us in the mouth when we would say, “Yeah”...It was only, “yes!” So people would be like, “Oh, you talk White.” My mom would pretty much be on my ass if I didn’t talk this way. You know what I’m saying? It was instilled in us from...a young age, “This is how you are going to talk.” Your pants...they were never going to be around your waist, I mean around your knees. We were never to be sagging. You always want to show respect and you know...that you’re an intelligent Black male because that’s what you need to exude out in public.

Raymon shared that he had never heard of success being a White thing. Raymon stated:

I have...never heard that...in those exact words, but like you get...the context clues on certain things growing up when you are in an all-Black school and...you don’t really see too many other people that don’t look like you. You can get that feeling of they are just pushing you by and just being another statistic a little bit. You kind of get that going through from K-12...you see us on the news and get perspectives from different areas like social media. So, it did impact me...in a
bad way, but also made me just want more out of who I am as a person. I wanted and knew success was me.

All of the participants exhibited holding the ethos that viewed success as a human, raceless, character trait embedded in their strong self-efficacy as a Black male. Success was viewed as achievable and in fact something that Black people must do in order to contribute to the greater society.

CRAI Dimension 3. Students possess a critical consciousness about racism and the challenges it presents to their present and future opportunities as well as other members of their racial group was Carter’s (2008) third dimension. Carter explained that education and racism exist as potential barriers to success for Black students. Each of the participants in this dissertation were keenly aware of racism, even if they could not evoke a memory where they had faced racism explicitly. Moreover, all participants acknowledged the systemic and structural nature of racism and the manner in which it could have impeded their success. Particularly, a few participants noted that racism and lowered expectations for Black males specifically was salient in their consciousness, beliefs, and habits. The participants remarked about this dimension during multiple instances. The following comments are a few examples.

Jon responded:

I think the biggest thing…I didn't really experience any…[explicit] racism. But, it was more being put in this situation where you’re asked to answer as a
representative of the Black Caucus. Like, I’m supposed to be able to represent all hundreds of millions of Black people across the world for their views. So, it was like you’re always getting put into those situations where White people ask you questions and you’re like, “Why am I being asked?” This has nothing to do with finance or accounting or whatever I’m learning in school or whatever project we’re working on, or work environment I’m in. But, that's just…the hand you're dealt and you just…have to learn how to internalize it and then also be able to clap back...without being disrespectful or unprofessional.

Jerome’s sentiments were similar to Jon’s regarding being aware of racism but could not think of an incident that was directed towards him. Jerome said:

I’ve never really witnessed it [racism] in front of me or like the act being done, but I know it goes on because being on social media, you see the racist thing that’s going on with campuses…that’s probably not too far from here, with the N-word being spray painted somewhere…the baby [doll] being hung, I know that happened recently at a school close by. So, really you just see it…you just know what's going on but I haven't...personally seen it in person yet.

Claude shared the following:

Just to go off of what everyone else said, I haven’t seen it or experienced it firsthand myself, but I’ve had friends that might have had that happen to them and my first instinct was not to go after that person, but to be there as a supporting
friend for them. Just basically helped them through it and to get their opinion on why it may have happened and what we could do to fix it instead of taking physical action on that person. Because, ultimately, that’s not going to solve anything.

Aaron previously witnessed racism but it was not directed towards him. Aaron shared:

I haven’t really gone through anything. I’ve definitely seen it with coworkers or…sometimes I do deal with it…with customers sometimes, but it’s nothing that really…makes me…go out of character to…react to it…. It’s not really a big issue for me, but I know that it is…still an issue.

In the focus group, Cavaughn quickly and directly challenged the others’ comments in regards to not directly experiencing racism. Cavaughn remarked:

Racism is well and apparent out here! It's more so…passive… [as I was] just walking here…I'm walking behind a girl, I'm moving fast, I'm trying to get here; and she turned, clutched her purse, and cut to a whole other direction; you know what I'm saying? …whether that was racist or not. Right? That's just experiences that you've come to understand. It will happen as a Black man.

One thing that's really important I think I want to touch on is like just with the police, right? You stay out the way of the police, like if you…encounter, I put my hands up…you talk well, you know what I'm saying? And keep the window
cracked…. That's how I was told though. Like you just stay out the way…when you…run into them…[it’s] going to come with some troubles but like just stay out of the way of the police…It's a lot. It's passive. It's really passive racism here on campus. And to a lot of guys who say it's not happening to them. Man, y'all be sure though. You know what I'm saying? Ya'll be sure. Cause like it could be happening in some of these offices that we not…represented in. You feel me? …so let's just be…totally aware…of all of our circumstances, of all of our surroundings.

One significant common remark related to the Black male collegians’ consciousness of racism and its effects was this notion that the Black male collegians’ actions were reflective of all other Black males. There was a conscious need to temper and self-check their responses in moments of conflict or potential perceived conflict. Again, their critical consciousness of racism and the challenges it presents to their future and others was noteworthy for these Black males.

Raymon offered a very clear example of his thoughts in response to the ways he has consciously avoided the negative effects of racism. Raymon expressed:

As a black male on this campus…I can't specifically pinpoint to… a racial action that was…towards me. When I do hear things or when I am experiencing that, I kinda just take into consideration…it’s bigger than you. You can’t really react on something that’s…they have an opinion to…But, if it’s something that’s to the
extent...disrespectful, me personally...I’m talking for myself, I just take it and analyze it and I kind of just observe why that person made the action and try to go about that. There’s no need to physically get involved...personally...[I] analyze the situations and grow from it.

**CRAI Dimension 4.** Students possess a pragmatic attitude about the value of schooling for their future. Education and school for the Black males were viewed as notably important. Carter (2008) asserted that education is viewed as a “vehicle for social and economic mobility” (p. 486). As it were, the successful Black male collegians also viewed education in this way. In addition to education as a means for social and economic advancement, the Black males viewed their education as an apparatus for collectively progressing the social conditions of the Black community. Largely, there was a belief that their education was not solely for themselves and they each had a responsibility to be conscious of their actions and its impact on the collective. This is exemplified in the following selected remarks.

Jon shared:

Education was a big factor in our household...there was a big focus on, you know, taking that seriously...I think there's nothing more important than a college education to me, personally. Just because a college education is more than just just...like education from...like a school standpoint, I think it's more of a maturation of a person just from learning how to interact with professionals,
learning how to…make your own decisions…it prepares you for whatever…you want to do in life. I think for me it definitely gave me purpose, gave me ideas to think about, you know what I can do to be part of something bigger than myself. Jerome also shared a similar message. He stated:

Once you start preparing for college, you really get the emphasis of how far education can take you… and how far [education] actually gets you in the world…A college education is very important because when I was younger… [he had] dreams of being in the NFL or NBA. That was one of my dreams and my mother and sister were really hammering on me that…everybody's not going to make it. But of course, being younger, you…don't want to hear that…. [He kept telling himself] “I'm gonna make it! I’m gonna make it!” But then once you get older and realize that they were right, everybody don't make it…So, I really value a college education because…I'm not going to the NFL or NBA, so I'm glad that I've got that college degree to fall back on.

Jerome further recalled how college was introduced to him as a place to go to “get an associate’s, and get a bachelor's, doctorate’s, a master's you have to do it to further better yourself in life…I knew school was important but never [not] how far it could take me til’ [I] got older.”

Raymon credited his persistence towards success as having a greater purpose. Raymon stated:
I’m not doing it for recognition. But, just to prove to statistics and prove to society that I can be what I want to be and that’s not being a drug dealer or that’s not being someone who was into sports. I like that and I want to do something different. I can do it!

Cavaughn shared that college was a challenge, but his mother’s support throughout has made him successful and his future success will be used to help her.

Cavaughn remarked about his mother:

Financially has been a crazy…challenge that came with being in college. But, she understood that, and she signed up, and she’s been rocking with me since…since the beginning. So, I’m definitely looking forward to paying it back; you know, and do my part to look out for her once it’s my turn.

The participants were asked to discuss their thoughts on the importance of a college education. Their responses follow.

Raymon indicated:

Just being in college is very important, very…important…the more you experience college, the more you will…find out that it's very important…it [college] just opened up the opportunity, opened the doors to things you will never ever have. So, I take it as a life lesson. So, college is very, very important. I kind of feel, like they say, everybody should get the experience of going to college. College, might not be for everybody but the experience and like just the
life and being around people, gaining mentors, and stuff like that has been beneficial.

Claude agreed and provided the following response:

To me personally, a college education is really important, especially in today’s age. There’s so much to learn, you can always learn something new. So, a college education not only gives you the information, but it teaches you how to receive the information and retain it.

Cavaughn shared:

The college education is important. I think the knowledge that you learn within class is less important than the experience you may go through while you’re on campus…The experiences you have with other people in other demographics…or other races may enlighten your mind too…so much more than sitting in front of the whiteboard and watching the teacher put up notes. But those discussions that we have here on campus within those classrooms as well, allows us to open our minds up and leave those rooms some days and just be like, “Wow, I wonder why it's this way?” Then again those experiences that may not be in the classroom, but they're in…a formal setting when you have a keynote speaker come in and it's almost like they're talking directly to you. You know? So, some of these things…the opportunities that arise when you come to a[n] institution, a college institution…is bountiful, I will say.
Aaron mentioned that he is enjoying the learning in college. Aaron stated:

It's very important when I know how people always ask me when I'm graduating and actually what I'm doing after college, and how I can use my degree…once I graduate. So, I learn a lot in a school…like not only from classes but the people around me. So, being in college and the experience is definitely being really good for me and I personally enjoy it.

Jon added a similar note:

I think there's nothing more important than a college education to me, personally. Just because a college education is more than…education from…a school standpoint, I think it's more of a maturation of a person just from learning how to interact with professionals, learning how to kind of make your own decisions, from national schooling standpoint, you know it prepares you for whatever…you want to do in life. I think for me it definitely gave me purpose, gave me ideas to think about, you know what I can do to be part of something bigger than myself.

In the end, participants believed that the value of schooling was both pragmatic and realistic with the views of society. The participants largely viewed education as the apparatus for joining an elevated social-class status. The participants’ college education success was supported through the desire to succeed to attain greatness for more than themselves. Education for the Black male collegians was not only about elevating themselves, but it was also about giving back to their community and family.
**CRAI Dimension 5.** Students value multicultural competence as a skill for success. Carter (2008) indicated that the participants “developed behavioral strategies akin to those of ‘border crossers’ or cultural straddlers (Carter, 2008), allowing them to move within and between various subcultures in the school” (p. 487). Further, Carter (2008) asserted that high achievers were able to exist in white spaces and learn to navigate Black and White cultural styles and styles related to success. This researcher determined that the successful Black male collegians did not fully exhibit this dimension in the same way as the participants in Carter’s (2008) study.

Although experiencing this dimension differently, the successful Black male participants expressed the importance of being able to work with people from different ethnicities; more specifically, their White peers. The participants acknowledged that their high school experiences, many of which were predominantly Black students, were not consistent with society or the spaces they will have to navigate in their future. Comments of the participants in focus group follow.

Jerome responded to the question regarding the importance of multicultural competence and noted:

Since I've been in college…I really seen it [the importance of multicultural competence] because I have a lot of professors that are White that really went to the full extent to help me, whether it was…recommendation letters, internships, just getting me in contact with people in my field that I want to work in and that
really helped me with and still continuing… that today. So, I feel like [it is] very important because you never know what someone knows, who somebody knows, and that could help me in the long run.

Jon added a similar note about the importance of multicultural competence, but from the perspective of learning how to navigate White spaces. Jon commented:

Growing up in the burbs, like I guess I…learned that [importance of multicultural competence] from early age. Um, but I would say like there's nothing I really learned about working with them. It’s really what I learned about…how to handle myself when I’m put in a weird situation. So, you’re always going to hear something ignorant, racist sayings like I always used to hear like, I’m “not really Black” because the way I talk is English. So, they thought the only [thing] Black males can be is…hood or ghetto or whatever. Like…rap music videos that they say. So, I kind of had to deal with…microaggressions toward that and shut it down without being too ‘pop offish’ and being unprofessional. So, that's pretty much the only thing I learned.

Raymon shared how he learned the importance of multicultural competence through involvement in sports like wrestling and how to use that understanding to persist and reach his end goal. Ramon remarked:

Growing up, I [had] two different stages…one being in my youth, I really…wasn’t in school with other people besides…Black people. But I was
involved in other activities and after school programs where it chance to actually participate and being in the same area and just see what…they about. Wrestling and stuff like that got me into…an atmosphere of houses, just working with people on wrestling…being able to learn. But when I got to college, it gave me the real world vibe. I'm a business major and…I know…for sure 100%, I won't…any job I get…just won’t to be all Black. I mean, I'm not, I'm not saying it to talk down, but I know 100% sure the first job I'll get…will be 9 times out of 10… [the job] would be…a majority of the people in the company will be White. Like what Cavaughn said, being able to get to the table and actually be switching…college made…is more relevant to what I want to do as far as my goals.

Claude mentioned how growing up in a “melting pot” helped him view the importance of multicultural competence. Claude shared:

Growing up schooling was basically; it was mixed for me. It wasn’t just all Black, it wasn’t all White. It was pretty much a melting pot. So, I pretty much learned that at an early age, how to work with other people. Going to college, it really started to make sense when the networking aspect came into play. Networking is a big key when you get into the professional world. Without networking, it’s going to be hard to get where you want to go. So, people you
network with aren’t always going to just be Black people. It’s going to be White people, it’s Hispanic people, and so forth. So that’s an important aspect. Aaron expressed that working with others was important and he began learning that through sports. Aaron responded:

Going off what Claude said, in high school, I…had Black and White, it was mainly Black but still had White people there. I had football teammates or in my honor’s classes and we had to work together. So, I kind of learned in high school how to work with people. Coming into college…networking is definitely important. To be able to network with just anybody, I feel like it’s something everybody needs and it took me some time because I’m not really that social skilled. It still came…when I was talking to my advisors and some of my teachers about how to get to the next step or what I have to do for classes…just being able to work with anyone in any situation.

Cavaughn shared an example of a movie to convey his point on how you can use multicultural competency to advance the community. Cavaughn stated:

I think growing up as a Black man, I understood that since day one because I understand I’m different than the majority of people out here. I want to talk about what I learned in the media growing up through…movies like the Spook at the Door. Who understood that you have to fit the part…he worked his way through the FBI. He was a Black man in Chicago in a gang or just in a unit of Black men
trying to change his community from being taken away from being impoverished and drug ridden. He tried to change his way. How did he do that? He signed up for the FBI. He studied all day, all night. I’m talking about man it was seven or eight people in his class and all they do is just study all day, all night. Everybody else was talking…they tried to say he was weird, like Jon pointed out.

When you are working hard, people are going to say you’re doing something different but you’re doing something different! So, he worked hard, joined the FBI and they put him at the bottom of the barrel. He was the first Black man in his class…they put him at the bottom of the bottom. He couldn’t do anything. He came up on so much information just in training, fighting, just self-defense…he turned around [and] taking [took] it back to his people…he going home and teaching his own classes. The training is putting these people in a mindset to understand that we’re taking it back…we going to get all the information they learn and using it against them [their barriers to his success]. I think that’s something I’ve picked up on and understanding that having a multicultural competency can get you a long way, especially going against your oppressors.

There was a general perception by all of the participants that learning to work with others is a critical skill to possess. Although some learned it in college; others learned it growing up, using this skill as a tool to further progress on their own behalf and
for the community was a clear value. Multicultural competence is a tool used to network and advance in society to ultimately succeed. This skill contributed to their ability to progress to their final year of college and beyond.

**CRAI Dimension 6.** Black male collegians develop practical adaptive strategies for overcoming racism within the larger society. Black male collegians develop practical adaptive strategies for withstanding and resisting racism in the school context to persist through to graduation despite obstacles anchored by a strong self-awareness of the perceptions of Black males within the larger society. Carter (2008) discussed that Black students developed practical strategies to overcome racism in school. Additionally, the students in Carter’s study navigated school with a positive racial identity and concept that allowed them to overcome racism and maintain high academic achievement without viewing it as “acting White.” However, the participants in this dissertation did not see the possibility of overcoming racism; yet I described their attitudes as withstanding and resisting racism. This difference is significant because all of the participants recognized the permanence of racism in society. This was true whether or not the Black male experienced overt racism directly, observed it on the periphery, or conceptually acknowledged its existence. Granted, one of the reasons for this mature conceptualization of racism is possibly due to the age difference between the samples. The participants in this dissertation were likely between five to ten years older than Carter’s (2008) high achieving school-aged students.
The participants developed adaptive strategies for withstanding and resisting racism while strongly being conscious that their actions impacted the larger societal view of Black males. This belief and philosophy assisted the Black males in this dissertation persist through to graduation despite consistent barriers and obstacles along the way. In fact, many of the participants transferred at least once due to obstacles around racism, financial aid, and the feeling of being utilized for their athletic ability. Some participants formed their adaptive strategies over time while traveling their collegiate path without intentional focus. Following are some examples where Black males demonstrated adaptive strategies to withstand and resist racism.

Jon mentioned, “That's just…the hand you're dealt and you just…have to learn how to internalize it and then also be able to clap back...without being disrespectful or unprofessional.”

For Claude, it was important to try to figure out why the racist incident occurred and to monitor his reaction when it is brought to him or he dealt with racism from a customer. Claude shared:

My first instinct was not to go after that person, but to be there as a supporting friend for them. Just basically helped them through it and to get their opinion on why it may have happened and what we could do to fix it instead of taking physical action on that person. Because, ultimately, that’s not going to solve anything…but it’s nothing that really something that makes me…go out of
character to…react to it…. It’s not really a big issue for me, but I know that it is…still an issue.

Cavaughn remarked that he avoided the police to prevent many challenges of racism. Cavaughn stated:

Racism is well and apparent out here! It will happen as a Black man. One thing that's really important I think I want to touch on is…the police…you stay out the way [of] the police, like if you…encounter, I put my hands up…you talk well, you know what I'm saying? And keep the window cracked…. That's how I was told though. Like you just stay out the way…when you…run into them…[it’s] going to come with some troubles but…just stay out of the way of the police.

Raymon offered a very similar strategy. Ramon remarked:

As a black male on this campus…when I do hear things or when I am experiencing that, I kinda just take into consideration…it’s bigger than you. You can’t really react on something that’s…they have an opinion to…but, if it’s something that’s to the extent…disrespectful, me personally…I’m talking for myself, I just take it and analyze it and I kind of just observe why that person made the action and try to go about that. There’s no need to physically get involved…personally…[I] analyze the situations and grow from it.
Summary of Findings

Six findings emerged from this dissertation of six successful Black male collegians. The initial four findings were emergent themes from this research around the parental engagement strategies of successful Black male collegians. The final two findings were theoretical findings centered on the beliefs held by the Black male collegians that contributed to their success. The six participants in this study provided rich data that aided in the ability to address the three research questions.

Utilizing CRAI (Carter, 2008), the data highlighted the six dimensions with added context when applied only to Black male collegians who were on track to graduate, but who were not necessarily high achieving. Out of this dissertation, seven principles were identified as an extension theory, termed CRAE, to explain the beliefs the successful Black male collegians assumed and were readily accessed to stimulate their college success.

The responses to the individual questions and focus group revealed that the Black male collegians attributed their success to their parents’ actions and attitudes. Black parents who provided sources of inspiration asked questions about their education, promoted education as essential, and delivered the realistic notion that Black males in society were required to work twice as hard. Similarly, the Black males were also successful because they possessed seven principles that contributed to their success.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings and major conclusions derived from data collection of interviews, writing samples, and a focus group. The research questions are discussed; specifically, (a) What types of parental engagement do Black male collegians attribute to their college success? (b) What is the participant’s perception of the role of race and racism in their own success and their parent’s contribution to it? and (c) Which characteristics of traditional parent involvement did the Black male collegians recall their parent’s performing? Parental engagement as a potential success factor for successful Black male collegians was explored. The purpose was to provide counter-narratives of Black male collegians and their parents. This dissertation focused on Black male narratives on parental engagement and their contributions to their college success. The dissertation emphasized the voices and experiences of successful Black male collegians and their families.

In exploring this topic and research questions, emergent themes arose from the thematic analysis which led to additional findings related to the parental engagement strategies that the participants attributed to impacting their collegiate success. This study extended and filled an existing gap within the discourse, the perceived impact of Black parents’ engagement with their students’ educational success. This dissertation
challenges the dominant deficit narrative regarding Black male education along the lines of Critical Race Theory (Bell, 2004), Critical Race Achievement Ideology (Carter, 2008), and the Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework (Harper & Quaye, 2009). CRAI was selected as the theoretical framework and analytical tool. The participants were about to or had recently graduated from college.

This researcher triangulated (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000) multiple data sources. Thematic and theoretical analyses were conducted from this data. The first four findings revealed the emergent themes of parental engagement of successful Black male collegians. The remaining two were theoretical in relation to CRAI and the principles avowed to by successful Black male collegians. This chapter includes the findings and its relevance to the existing literature as well as a discussion of the significance, need, and purpose as the six findings derived. The implications and conclusions of this dissertation concluded this chapter.

**Discussion of Black Parents Serving as Sources of Inspiration**

Black parents provided sources of inspiration throughout the Black male collegians’ lives. The parental sources of inspiration for the Black males revealed negative and positive messages as a method of encouraging them to persist in their education, their expectations for education, performance of widely accepted parental involvement activities, and in the form of inspirational phrases.
Most of the Black male collegians’ parents did not read books to them when they were growing up, did not specifically dedicate homework time, and did not have home libraries or books readily available throughout the household. However, their parents did encourage regularly attending church, reading the Bible, attending Bible study, and providing biblical and spiritual responses in moments of need. These findings confirm Taylor’s (1988) assertion that the Black church serves as a source of inspiration and the impetus for social mobility among Blacks in America.

Clark et al. (2015) discussed of how the participants in their research derived great inspiration from their parents to be successful. Consistent with Clark et al., the Black parents in this dissertation highlighted successful Black people through newspaper clippings, their own networks, and messages of perseverance. Some parents also highlighted the negative perceptions of Black males and society’s destructive expectations for the future of Black males as a means of inspiring their sons to achieve.

As Vega and Moore (2012) elaborated, there are long-lasting benefits of familial support and encouragement in college for African American students and, in their case, Latino students.

**Discussion of Black Parents Asking Questions**

Often in the dominant deficit narrative, Black parents are described as being disinterested in their children’s education and as detriments to their children’s success (Herndon & Hirt, 2004). In contrast, this dissertation confirmed Kane’s (2000) assertion
that Black families overwhelmingly hope that their children do better than they did; also, “they tend to believe that education and hard work are the necessary vehicles, particularly in light of the societal barriers,” (p. 694). All six participants shared that their parents asked questions about school throughout their educational journey. Lareau (1987) argued that the interpretation in the dominant literature of limited interest on the part of Black families is a mischaracterized relationship that should serve as a mechanism to bring resolution. Parent support resources should be dedicated to facilitating parents to engage with their children in the ways that they are most interested.

Robinson and Harris (2014) argued that schools and research should recognize other ways outside of the traditional methods that parents can be engaged in their children’s education. According to this dissertation’s participants, encouraging parents to ask questions about school, the college decision-making process, and continuing this in college is beneficial. O’Bryan et al. (2006) asserted that participation in sports is a way to increase parent involvement in low-income and first-generation families. This dissertation confirmed that this type of engagement was beneficial in both the secondary and postsecondary settings. The Black males shared that parents’ engagement in relation to changes such as transferring colleges and quitting sports stimulated their success.

Robinson and Harris (2014) advanced an integrated ideology for the role of parental engagement in the success of students. Specifically, Robinson and Harris addressed the multitude of ways schools can improve relationships through parent
engagement. Parents asking their sons questions was not a theme that their research suggested. However, this dissertation revealed an emergent theme that asking questions revealed parents of Black males invest in their education. It also provided motivation for the participants to overcome any obstacles presented along their educational journey.

The successful Black males went beyond the research in this area, which suggests that they and their parental contributions are an under-researched topic. This topic required more attention by scholarship to gain a better understanding of whether or not this theme was only true for this sample or if it could be extended more broadly.

Auerbach (2007) concluded that Black families are dysfunctional. However, the successful Black males in this dissertation recalled ways their parents supported, inspired, and encouraged their educational journey. In fact, it was clear that their parents desired more in life for their children. This researcher would not categorize what the participants described as dysfunctional; they described loving parents whose struggles with finances prevented them from fully participating in their school physically, while others were able to do so. This fact alone did not indicate a major difference in the participants.

**Discussion of Education is Salient for Black Parents**

The findings added to the growing narratives of how Black male collegians construct their success with the help of their parents. Scott and Black (1989) argued that the dominant discourse and literature on family structures are biased against Black families. Black parents have endured portrayals as primarily being responsible for the
achievement gap between Black and White students (Robinson & Harris, 2014). Ladson-Billings (1995) posited that there are many causes for the achievement disparities that exist, that are structurally related to the school—not the families. A prevalent mythological master narrative suggests that all people in America can simply pull themselves up by their bootstraps. McLeod (2009) asserted that the mainstream American belief in the achievement ideology leads to viewing Black parents as a malefactor for Black males’ achievement.

On the other hand, Hrabowski et al. (1998) argued that Black parents contribute greatly to Black male college success, and that “parents” includes fictive parents. In this dissertation, biological parents, a grandparent, and a sibling acted as parental figures and had a significant impact on the participants’ decision to attend and persist through college. The dominant literature has usually ignored fictive kin as parents, although this is prevalent in Black American communities. Two of the successful Black males identified a grandparent and a sister as playing the role of parent for them while they were growing up. Others grew up in single-parent households or had parents who divorced during their high school years. The dominant literature would not consider their experiences related to their kin as relevant. Chatters et al. (1994) asserted that literature would characterize their situations as “broken homes” which would mean that many parents of the participants in this would be described as non-supportive, being
(Aschenbrenner, 1973) unable to be involved in the school due to too many stresses such as multiple jobs.

Only two participants grew up in two-parent households during their entire childhood. It is true that these were the only families that were clear and consistent examples of conventional notions of parent involvement in schools; such as sports, coaching, volunteering, president of PTA, and many other things. However, this researcher found that in every instance, the participants described ways that their parents were involved and promoted the importance of education. Education was salient in each of their households. Some parents utilized stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1998) and the fear of being a statistic to motivate their sons when necessary. The participants described their parents as being vocal about the importance of education, attending college, and being serious about their studies. This was an evident theme regardless of the parents’ educational background or socioeconomic status.

Additionally, each participant characterized their parents as wanting better life outcomes for them, as compared to their parents. This was directly tied to college education for five of the participants. For one participant, the parent was open to entertaining the military as an option, but there was a definite desire from each parent for their son to have a plan for post-high school. Many of the parents saw education as the apparatus for greater life experiences and outcomes. Bourdieu and Passerone (1977) posited that cultural capital and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) are mechanisms for social
mobility and greater life outcomes for individuals. Education is a vehicle for gaining more social and cultural capital (Forsyth & Adams, 2004).

Education was salient for each of the families in this study, dependent upon the circumstances of the parents. Many of the participants shared that their parents did not have a home library, or set aside reading time, or homework time; measures often cited in school involvement literature. However, some participants described the importance of owning a library card or participating in a summer reading program while growing up. Other participants revealed that their parents read the Bible to them or often took them to church as a way of promoting a strong educational foundation.

**Discussion of Working Twice as Hard**

The participants revealed stories of how their parents embedded in their consciousness that society would judge them much harder than their White friends or others. This led to many messages of “working twice as hard” and providing multiple examples of the ways Black males are widely and negatively portrayed as lacking in many ways. The participants candidly shared their experiences in which they were perceived as a threat. Supporting their perceptions, Alexander (2010) described how schools over-discipline Black boys when they are young, and the police directly target Black men in their youth. Alexander showed how Black boys are often viewed as menacing criminals beginning at a very early age, which creates a fear of them in society. Harper (2012a) reported that high achieving Black male college students had been
perceived as suspect, even drug dealers. Consistent with those respected authors’ work, the participants in this dissertation revealed that their parents prepared them to face this as a reality. To combat imagined societal fear, the parents emphasized proper dress and socializing with family members who were educated, church members, or educated family friends, who could set an example of their future possibilities. Black parents of the participants discussed with their sons the importance of being mindful of how they respond to moments of microaggressions, racism; or in general, how they were very mindful of how they were perceived by others.

The participants addressed at length their fear of being characterized as angry, violent young Black men. Steele and Aronson (1998) found that a person’s fear of fulfilling a negative stereotype could in fact lead them to conforming to a version of that stereotype. The participants did not share any moments where they actualized a self-fulfilling prophecy of stereotypes of Black males. However, they did reveal that they had a fear of such.

Three participants directly revealed responding head on to racism, microaggressions, and moments of racial discomfort. However, their responses revealed that they would “clap back” or provide a seething response bracketed in professionalism. The participants did not want to intentionally appear to be violent; and discussed that the ramifications for getting physical would greatly restrict their future prospects. Their
parents deserve some credit for the participants’ awareness and development of this principle held by the successful Black male collegians in this study.

**Discussion of Critical Race Achievement Ideology**

CRAI (Carter, 2008) was selected as the theoretical framework and analytical tool because it places the students at the center. I have always thought, like CRT and CRAI, that achievement is interrelated with race, power, and social class; and that identity development of Black students is critical in their school success (Carter, 2008). In the emergent themes, many of the dimensions of CRAI were represented. The six dimensions of CRAI are detailed in the following discussion.

**Dimension 1: Students Believe in Themselves**

Students believe in themselves and feel that individual efforts and self-accountability lead to school success (Carter, 2008). The successful Black male collegians demonstrated that they possessed this ideology throughout the interviews and focus group. They saw themselves as having the chief role in their success. They discussed ways that parents encouraged and motivated them to achieve success. Yet, they all shared that if they did not put in the work or pushed through the times when they may have desired or considered dropping out of school, their success would not have been possible. There was consensus among participants that they all have viewed success as being possible and that they all were capable of success. One participant went further and shared that he knew success was possible if he chose to tap into it. The participants
viewed success as a choice that they each consciously made through their efforts and self-accountability.

**Dimension 2: Students Viewed Achievement as Raceless**

Students view achievement as a human, raceless character trait embedded in their sense of self as a racial being (Carter, 2008). The participants unanimously stated that they did not view achievement or success as an “acting White” thing as Ogbu and Simon (1998) suggested. Each of the participants did mention that they were aware that there were many people who felt that sentiment. However, they characterized success as financial and something greater than themselves. The participants viewed success as something that anyone who put forth the effort is capable of achieving. Their identity as Black males was a salient for them in their success. Each participant discussed how being a Black male there were expectations for them to fail and, in some cases, society was waiting for them to fail. However, the successful Black male participants made conscious decisions to be successful while promoting themselves as strong Black males were central to this dimension.

**Dimension 3: Students Possess Consciousness About Racism**

Students possessed a critical consciousness about racism and the challenges it presents to their present and future opportunities as well as other members of their racial group (Carter, 2008). The participants were keenly aware of the challenges that racism presented them as they progressed through education and for their futures. They also
identified that they recognized that role, that racism determines the futures of many other Black males. They discussed their reasons for excelling and performing well in school which was to be an example for other Black males. The participants were in consensus when describing that their educational success was for their families and the entire Black community. Harper (2013) argued that Black male achievement was underpinned through their understanding of racism. Furthermore, Harper (2014) identified that the campus climate could be toxic for Black male collegians’ success. Three of the participants discussed the negative campus climate towards Black males precipitated the fact that they transferred institutions.

**Dimension 4: Students Possessed Pragmatic Attitudes About Schooling**

Students possessed a pragmatic attitude about the value of schooling for their future (Carter, 2008). The participants consistently promoted the importance of school and college. They were very aware that their education was necessary for their future. Carter (2008) suggested that Black students who viewed school as a practical means for advancing their futures were successful. Each of the participants presented cogent reasons for persisting in education and they were aware that education would serve as an apparatus for their future. Education was a means to an end for many of the participants. However, none of their motives were selfish or self-serving. In fact, the participants value for schooling was quite the contrary.
Dimension 5: Students Valued Multicultural Competence

Students valued multicultural competence as a skill for success (Carter, 2008). The participants valued multiculturalism as a skill to further their futures. For the participants, they were cognizant of the composition of the work world and the prospects that they would likely need to know how to work alongside individuals who were different than them. In fact, one participant mentioned that he was quite certain that his future work circumstances would definitively consist of individuals that did not look like him. Therefore, it was imperative to learn how to interact with different people. Carter (2008) asserted that multicultural competence is an essential skill that the students possessed as a mechanism to successfully exist within multiple spaces. The participants agreed that success required understanding how to exist within a white space while maintaining a connection to their identity as Black men.

Dimension 6: Students Overcome Racism

Students developed adaptive strategies for overcoming racism in the school context that allow them to maintain high achievement and strong racial/ethnic self-definitions (Carter, 2008). The participants demonstrated part of this dimension. The participants revealed that they needed to learn to adapt to racism within college and throughout school. However, their discussions did not lead to a belief that they were overcoming racism. Their comments could be more appropriately categorized as withstanding and resisting racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998;
Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Carter (2008) described the successful Black students who possessed a positive attitude as a mechanism that absolved themselves from racism. The participants explained that racism was constant and would always be present in society. All of them spoke several times in many ways about their strong sense of self as a Black man as attributing to their success. The discussion of Critical Race Aspiration Ethos (CRAE) discusses more of this dimension as an adjusted principle to fit this discrepancy in the successful Black males’ narratives compared to this CRAI dimension.

**Discussion of Cultivating a Critical Race Aspiration Ethos**

I framed this dissertation by extending CRAI to include the role of parental engagement. This extension of the model lead to the emergence of a new way to conceptualize the success of Black male collegians. The participants described experiences and beliefs that were aligned closely with CRAI (Carter, 2008). However, they discussed principles that they possessed in different ways than the students in Carter’s (2008) study. I determined that there are four elements transferred by parents, which activated seven core principles that Black male collegians cultivated for success. Parents provided an environment within which, or as a result of which, Black male collegians could formulate and hold beneficial principles for pursuit of college graduation. I call this a Critical Race Aspiration Ethos (CRAE). CRAE encompassed the principles that the participants came to hold that contributed to their success within the space that their parents’ engagement with their education had created.
I chose *ethos* over ideology and *principles* over dimensions to express the relation to a community’s belief and aspirations related to the sense of belonging that Strayhorn (2012) argued that affirmed Black male success. Ethos is used in social theory around explaining culture. Emmerich (2016) discussed ethos and habitus in his article on sociological theory. Ethos is specifically defined as the “spirit, morality, ethic, attitudes, worldviews” and can be applied to individuals (p. 274). This fits the individual attitudes and principles possessed by the participants in this dissertation. More specifically, ethos fits as a descriptor of a cultural characteristic of successful Black males whose beliefs are embedded in their self-efficacy of race.

Additionally, the participants were clear that their understanding of their education also encompassed non-instrumental aspirational motives particular to their racial identity. This is a significant difference from CRAI. The participants explained that their educational success was for “something bigger,” such as providing for their parents as a repayment for their sacrifices, their future families, and the collective Black community. This altruistic belief permeated the vast majority of the participants’ narratives.

The participants identified five cultivators of Black male success, which were parent engagement elements and four essential collegiate success principles that they all possessed. These five cultivators conceptualize CRAE and are in part adaptations of CRAI. Wording was changed and some principles were combined for CRAE to reflect
the themes from the Black male collegians and center on the core of their contributors to success. The CRAE consists of the cultivators of Black male success:

1. Key Parental Engagement Elements
   a. Parents provided sources of inspiration.
   b. Parents asked questions about education.
   c. Parents emphasized salience of education.
   d. Parents shared messages of working twice as hard and importance of persisting.

2. The Black males possessed a strong sense of self as a Black man.

3. The Black male collegians valued multicultural competence and adaptive strategies for withstanding racism as skills for success.

4. The Black male collegians possessed a strong value for education and community of peer and role model support.

5. The Black male collegians possessed an altruistic ideology of aspiration for themselves, their future families and the Black community.

The following sections show the participants’ philosophies of altruism to benefit the collective Black race. The ethos that the Black male collegians cultivated was centered on elevating their own dreams along with the standing of the Black male and Black community broadly. Earlier in this chapter, the four key parental engagement
elements were discussed. The four essential collegiate success principles are outlined briefly in this next section.

**Success Principle 1: Black Male Collegians Sense of Self as a Black Man.**

The first success principle is a critical element of success for the participants was a strong sense of self as a Black man in society. The Black male collegians viewed themselves as strong Black men and their education as an apparatus for withstanding and resisting the effects of racism on themselves, their families, and the entire Black community. The participants did not view themselves as a statistic in society or characterize other Black males as thugs, criminals, or incapable.

On the contrary, they saw themselves as powerful, capable, intelligent, hopeful and many other affirming words when asked to describe themselves and other Black men. As Harper and Davis (2012) found, the Black men saw education as the great equalizer and was a boost to their self-efficacy as a Black man. This value in self and belief in self as an achiever emerged throughout all of the participants’ stories and resonated in the focus group and short writings.

**Success Principle 2: Black Male Collegians Withstand Racism**

The second principle of CRAE is, Black male collegians valued multicultural competence and adaptive strategies for withstanding racism as skills for success. The participants discussed that they employed adaptive strategies for withstanding racism throughout their educational experiences and shared that these strategies helped them
remain on track for graduation and navigate through obstacles. Carter (2008) suggested that part of this ideology is resilience. The participants recalled moments of resilience throughout their lives that demonstrated that they were resilient prior to college.

Instead of claiming resilience, the participants discussed their awareness of the bleak societal expectations served to motivate them to succeed. This awareness coupled with their own positive attitudes about their own abilities were fundamental for the participants as a response to what they perceived as the permanence of racism in our society. Their perception echoed the CRT tenet of the permanence of race as proposed by Bell (1980). The participants also included a strong sense of self as Black men as a key ingredient to their collegiate success and that education was their mechanism for withstanding and resisting the effects of racism and resisting its constraints on their family and community.

Delgado & Stefancic (2012) similarly posited that success for racially marginalized individuals is only possible when they acknowledge the continuous role that racism plays in every facet of American society. Carter (2008) instead positioned resilience as a skill for overcoming racism and its constraints on social and economic mobility. Here, CRAE deviates from CRAI on the difference between overcoming and resisting racism. I as did the participants recognize our inability to dismantle racism completely and hence substitute overcome racism for withstanding and resisting racism.
Success Principle 3: Black Male Collegians Value Education and Support

The third principle is, Black male collegians possessed a strong value for education and communities of peer and role model support. The Black male collegians possessed a strong value for education that they attributed to their parents as contributors to their success. This possession of education as a value for success for the Black males was one of the driving forces for them not giving up. Harper and Davis (2012) asserted that Black men are not hopeless and in fact do view education as a great return on their investments. The Black males in this dissertation were the same. They saw that a strong value in education was their passport to a greater future, but they could not simply do it alone.

The participants in this dissertation searched for a community of support in college as a source for boosting their own success. They sought connections and relationships with like-minded peers who were laser focused on completing their degrees. Many of them considered dropping out, or did stop out, for at least a semester with one of the reasons being a lack of relationships with peers and Black male professional role models.

Strayhorn (2008) argued that Black males lack the sense of belonging at collegiate institutions that affect their overall desire to persist there. This was the case for a few of the participants who transferred from different institutions, but all of them found belonging at their current institution. They enlisted peers and role models on the campus
as a community to provide motivation to persist. The participants also revealed that they required relationships with other Black males as a way of having individuals who understood them and did not judge them. The participants felt this community of support that they sought surrounded around a non-judgement zone.

This principle was incorporated into CRAE to capture the participants’ desire to build relationships and find their community. CRAE did not include the value that peer and role model relationships have on Black males’ ability to succeed. This principle emerged as a common theme that could not be ignored and did not easily fit into any of the other principles. Carter (2008) posited that students who possessed these beliefs were not synonymous with denying their Blackness. The participants provided consistent beliefs as they sought to remain true to themselves while also understanding the features that propelled success through education. The participants sought community as a way to remain connected and grounded through their experiences of oftentimes loneliness as the only Black male in their major or program.

**Success Principle 4: Black Male Collegians Possess Altruistic Ideology of Aspiration**

The fourth principle is, Black Male Collegians possessed an altruistic ideology of aspiration for themselves, their families, and the Black community. The successful Black male participants agreed with Harper and Davis (2012) that education was critically important to their growth and future. Palmer et. al. (2011) argued that Black male collegians who were considered unprepared at the time of entering college but still
graduated considered education as a major factor in their ability to succeed in life. This
was also true for the participants in this dissertation.

Beyond the high value they placed in education, the participants demonstrated
principles of great aspirations for the Black community. The successful Black males
actualized an altruistic spirit that bonded each of them to the collective Black community.
This is best described as a dutiful communal efficacy. The participants’ conceptualized
education as larger than an individual endeavor and the value of their education centered
on a reinvestment into their community and families. The participants viewed
themselves holistically as representatives and catalysts for changing the narrative of
Black males.

Harper and Davis (2012) argued that the Black males who are invested in their
own success view schooling as paramount and attributed part of their success to their
parents. The participants were intentional about utilizing their education as a mechanism
to celebrate those devoted to their success. They felt obliged to repay those who were
committed to their development. The participants also viewed their education and
success as a success for the entire Black community and their own immediate families.

This type of attribution to success and for educational attainment is characterized
as altruistic because the meaning was for something outside of themselves. Their
education and success were centered on their aspirations for their families and the entire
Black community to have role models that can uplift and be positive contributors to
society. CRAE are the principles possessed by Black males that centered on their aspirations for their own success but more broadly the impact their success has on the Black community. CRAE is also acknowledging the four parental engagement elements that the Black males considered to be major contributors to their success.

**Conclusions**

This dissertation sought to address some of the gaps in the literature on educationally successful Black males and parental engagement. Although in the last two decades there has been research on Black male success that challenges the deficit-centered research on Black achievement, this dissertation sought to explore the experiences of Black males and the influence of their parents. This researcher pursued answers to the following research questions:

1. What types of parental engagement do Black male collegians attribute to their college success?

2. What is the participant’s perception of the role of race and racism in their own success and the way their parent’s contributed to it?

3. Which characteristics of traditional parent involvement did the Black male collegians recall their parent’s performing?

This researcher concluded that four different elements of parental engagement contributed to the success of Black male collegians. Those engagement strategies were providing sources of inspiration, asking questions, promoting education as salient and
providing a realistic understanding of societal expectations for Black males. This study also found that successful Black male collegians considered consciousness of race and racism as essential factors to their success and contributed to how the participants and their parents engaged with their education. Lastly, this study concludes that emphasizing the importance of education is the only commonality between parental engagement and traditional parental involvement.

The participants overwhelmingly agreed that their parents were a significant factor in their success. Success was regarded differently but they saw education and success as aspirations for a larger goal. The findings led to the construction of CRAE to represent the principles that educationally successful Black males possessed. CRAE acknowledges that parental engagement activated seven core principles that Black male collegians cultivated for success. CRAE extended CRAI to higher education and reconceptualized it as an ethos in which racism is resisted (Carter, 2008).

The conceptualization of CRAE offers researchers an additional theoretical frame for inquiries into Black male success models. It fills a gap not previously addressed by other literature. This new concept provides an additional tool to understand the success of Black male collegians in a more holistic manner. For tertiary institutions, the achievement gap between Black males and all other students is considered to be of important concern (Harper, 2013). In a national climate that increasingly views the cost and benefit of college as “not worth the money,” institutions must find a way to not only
demonstrate the value of a college education, but they must also responsibly commit to ensuring equitable access and opportunities for students from all backgrounds. Educational equity and access are increasingly becoming a prevalent indicator of success for higher education institutions. Ohio recently changed its state funding model for public institutions to promote the graduation and progression of “diverse” students. The more successful institutions become at assisting students to succeed, the greater the financial benefits.

Building strong relationships between public educational institutions and parents of Black males suggests a shifting of onus from the parent or institution to a reciprocal responsibility. This model would increase the success of the Black males and contribute to the shift away from the predominant deficit discourse. As this dissertation concludes, the acknowledgment of the effects of racism and race in the Black males’ educational journey is essential in understanding the relationship between students and institutions. Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) encouraged schools to recognize the function of race educational inequities at their institutions. The responsibility should not be left one-sidedly for Black males to earn success only if they are able to negotiate the systemic conditions of racism and inequality. CRAE offers a new framing to view and address Black male college success.

**Future Research**
The influence of parental engagement in the success of Black male collegians needs to be explored further. The five cultivators of CRAE need to be observed in other higher education settings and Black male collegians to explore their broader applicability. Future research should include parents as participants to determine the level of intentionality of their decisions and actions. Additionally, the four key elements of parental engagement deserve specific consideration exclusively by researchers regarding their effectiveness, necessity, and sufficiency for contributing to the success of Black males.

Half of the participants transferred institutions, from either a community college or another four-year institution. This factor was not isolated or controlled for prior to constructing the study. Hence, this factor may require more extensive inquiry on the impact of transferring institutions on Black male success in college. Wood (2012) discussed collegiate persistence and degree attainment of Black males and argued that academic integration was a significant factor in college completion for Black males who begin at community college. Both Black male collegiate transitions and the roles that parents have in that process warrant further study in future research.

One of the unexplored topics in this dissertation that deserves further research would be this notion of Blackness as property for successful Black males. Bell (2004) posited that CRT stipulates that whiteness functions as a property in America. Simply, a person who is White possesses many rights and privileges in society that are
indiscriminately afforded to him or her for no other reason than their White skin. There was potentially a theme from this study that suggested that the successful Black males saw their Blackness with a sense of pride and ownership. Unlike in Bell’s (1980) tenets, Blackness as property is about a collective pride and sense of duty to other Blacks assigned by the mere membership in the Black community. This Blackness is centered on the collectivity with which one is affiliated, while Whiteness as property is about the individual possession but predicated by affiliation with the entire racial group. This future research topic may invoke rich information that may inform future policies and practices.

Future research should inquire into the applicability of CRAE in the success strategies for Black parents on their Black males during their K-12 education. This research could explore whether CRAI, CRAE, or another model best fits the ways Black parents engage with their son’s educational success. Overall, this research can inform a better reciprocal relationship between schools and higher education institutions with parents. It also could apprise community programs and agencies on strategies to suggest to parents and schools on successful tools to engage with one another. This future research should seek to facilitate greater relationships among public institutions and the Black community to adequately address the educational disparities that exist across our country at every level.
Implications

One of the implications is that parental engagement should be elevated to a higher status in the higher education context. Community colleges, colleges, and universities could begin utilizing parents to engage in the success of their Black male students. Incorporating the parents into the success strategy of Black males could increase the overall success of their students at the institutions. Once institutions begin to value the ways Black parents engage with their Black males, they can build stronger mutually-beneficial relationships to stimulate success. This is also true for primary and secondary school districts. Male achievement is an underexplored area and the achievement gap begins as early as elementary school and becomes quite difficult to reduce later, according to Graves (2010). Instead of focusing inquiries on Black males in primary and secondary school who do not succeed, there should be greater emphasis on elevating the discourse on successful Black males. This would bridge the discussion and promote more replication of success and broaden the conventional narrative to become more of an accurate reflection of the experiences of successful Black male collegians.
APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE
APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Study Title: Successful Black Male Collegians: The Parental Engagement Factor.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Vilma Seeberg, Associate Professor
Co-Principal Investigator: N. J. Akbar, Ph.D. Candidate – Cultural Foundations of Education

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and if there are any associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary; you may withdraw at any moment that you are uncomfortable. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Purpose:
This study explores parent contributions on the success of Black male collegians. This study will include five (5) through seven (7) Black male collegians who are graduating seniors attending a predominantly white institution of higher education. Utilizing interviews and a follow-up focus group, the study will explore how the parent engagement of the participants contributed to their college success. This study will focus on the experiences of Black males who persist in college rather than those who obtain high grades. This dissertation explores “persisting” Black males and have them recount the parental engagement strategies from K-12 and college, which they perceive to have positively affected their college persistence. Ultimately, this study will provide a direct challenge to the prevailing deficit rhetoric that permeates the topic of Black male college student success and Black families.

Procedures
Participation in the interview will typically last between 60-90 minutes. The interview will ask you several questions relating to your background and a short series of questions relating to the skills you utilized that may have been influenced by your perceptions of your parent’s engagement while you were in K-12. You will be asked to provide specific details to your experiences, both at a younger age and more recently. Participants will be asked a few follow up questions in a 60-90 minutes’ focus group with the other participants. The interviewer will ask you to pick a name (pseudonym) to protect your identity. The conversations will be recorded and transcribed but only your selected “false” name will be used to ensure that your comments cannot be traced back to you. Information gathered during the interview(s) will remain confidential within the limits of the law by the researchers. Participation in this study will not impact grades, class standing, or your relationship to Kent State University. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time.

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Audio and Video Recording and Photography
The interviews will be audiotape recorded only to ensure that all of your comments and experiences are captured. The tapes will be transcribed and destroyed after verifying the accuracy of the transcriptions.

Benefits
This research will not benefit you directly except to clarify your memories of how you came to enroll in college. However, your participation in this study will help us to better understand how parents engage Black males in their college success. Your responses and experiences can help redefine the ways Black male success and parental engagement is explained in research.

Risks and Discomforts
There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life.

Privacy and Confidentiality
You will be asked to pick a false name or pseudonym for use in this study; your name, email, phone number will be collected but stored separately. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from your interview recording. A list using a code to identify your personal information will be kept and stored separately. Your responses will not be linked to your identifying information. Any identifying information will be kept in a secure location and only the researchers will have access to the data. Your research information may, in certain circumstances, be disclosed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which oversees research at Kent State University, or to certain federal agencies. Confidentiality may not be maintained if you indicate that you may do harm to yourself or others.

Voluntary Participation
Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You will be informed of any new, relevant information that may affect your health, welfare, or willingness to continue your study participation.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact N. J. Akbar at 313-478-4640 or Dr. Vilma Seeborg at 330.672-0604. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

Consent Statement and Signature
I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

Participant Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________
APPENDIX B

AUDIOTAPE/VIDEO CONSENT FORM
APPENDIX B

AUDIOTAPE/VIDEO CONSENT FORM

SUCCESSFUL BLACK MALE COLLEGIANS: THE PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT FACTOR

DR. VILMA SEEBERG, PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
N. J. AKBAR, CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

I agree to participate in an audio-taped/videotaped interview about Black male collegians and their parents as part of this project and for the purposes of data analysis. I agree that N. J. Akbar may audiotape/video tape this interview. The date, time and place of the interview will be mutually agreed upon.

__________________________________________________________
Signature                                                   Date

I have been told that I have the right to listen to the recording of the interview before it is used. I have decided that I:

_____want to listen to the recording                             _____do not want to listen to the recording

AFTER LISTENING TO THE AUDIO:
Sign now below if you do not want to listen to the recording. If you want to listen to the recording, you will be asked to sign after listening to them.

N. J. Akbar may / may not (circle one) use the audio-tapes/video tapes made of me. The original tapes or copies may be used for:

_____this research project _____publication _____presentation at professional meetings

__________________________________________________________
Signature                                                   Date

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APPENDIX C

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS AND PROTOCOL
APPENDIX C

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS AND PROTOCOL

Primarily I seek to find out what Black male college students believe that their parent(s) has/have done that has helped in their persistence in college.

Black Male College Students Interview Protocol

1. In what way did you enjoy or appreciate your schooling and your education in general?
2. What were some of the things that motivated and challenged you while in college?
3. How important is a college education to you?
4. How did your parents convey the importance of education to you?
5. How early do you recall these messages being sent?
6. Prior to entering college, how did your parent(s) engage in your education? Prompt: reading time with your parent, dedicated homework time and availability of books?
7. What were some of your family’s expectations about college?
   A. How does this compare to the larger society’s expectations of Black males?
   B. When was the first time do you recall hearing about college? What was your perception of that conversation about college?
8. What are your perceptions of your parent’s role regarding your education? Describe in any way that comes to mind.
9. What hurdles or obstacles did you encounter in college and how did you navigate through them?
10. What does success look like for you?
11. What factors do you attribute to your success?
    Prompts:
    a. Individual
    b. Home/Parent
    c. Peer, Community
    d. School factors
12. What are some of your goals after college graduation?
13. How do you continue to avoid being a “statistic”?
14. In what ways does race play in your college success?
15. Did you purposefully seek out opportunities and experiences based upon your racial identity as a Black person or Black male?
   A. If so, what were those experiences?
   B. Why did you seek them out?
16. Did you face any moments of racism in college?
   A. If so, what were they?
   B. What did you do or learn afterwards?
   C. Did you do anything differently to navigate the campus or the classroom?
17. Is there anything else that you want to share about your college success?
APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE
## APPENDIX D

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Date: ___________  |  Successful Black Male Collegians: The Parental Engagement Factor  
Gender of Participant: ___________  
Participant #: ___________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics Sheet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High School Attended and Graduation Year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What city was your high school in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List your involvements while in college:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to attending college, what did you do to prepare to attend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSEOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT/SAT Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List the parent(s) or adult family member played the largest role in you attending college? (Include their email and phone number)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| What was their relationship to you?  
*For example:* Birth Mother, Birth Father, Adopted Parent, Grandparent, Aunt, Uncle |
| Rate the likelihood that they would be willing to participate in a future study by answering questions about their engagement in your college success? |
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Unsure | Not Likely | Very Likely |
| What is their educational background, include name of institutions (if possible) |
| This line included, if need for a second parent |
| What was their work/employment status |
| Employed: Full-Time | Employed: Part-Time |
| Retired | Disability | Unemployed |
| This line included, if needed for a second parent |
| Growing up, how much do you estimate was your family’s annual income? |
| 0-$30,000 | $30,000-$75,000 | $75,000-$100,000 |
| $100,000-$175,000 | $175,000+ |
APPENDIX E

GUIDING QUESTIONS AND OUTLINE FOR FOCUS GROUP
APPENDIX E
GUIDING QUESTIONS AND OUTLINE FOR FOCUS GROUP

❖ Post-It Notes Carousel (5:30-5:45PM) [15 mins.]
 ➢ What role did religion/church play in your education? Household?
 ➢ Did your parents make you read a religious text or read it to you?
 ➢ When it came to homework, what phrases did your parents say to you? How were your parents involved, if at all?
 ➢ While in college, what phrases or sayings did your parents say to you to keep you motivated?
 ➢ Did anyone in your extended family go to college? Who? Were there any educators in your family that you heard about?
 ➢ How important was the pre-college preparation programs in your college success? Did your parents encourage or pay for your participation?
 ➢ Describe yourself as a Black man in America.
 ➢ In school what were your teacher’s expectations for you? In Elementary? In Middle School? In High School?
 ➢ Describe how you felt about your school growing up?

❖ One Minute Paper (5:45-5:50PM) [5 mins.]
 ➢ What role did your parents play in your school growing up? (PTA, Volunteer in Lunchroom, Chaperone trips, help in your classroom)

❖ Discussion on K-12 Schooling (5:50 – 6:10) [20 minutes]
 ➢ Did any other member of your family talk to you about college growing up? Did your parents intentionally expose you to them? Were there any educators in your family that you heard about?
 ➢ When your parents would go to your school, what were the reasons and how did they describe their experiences?
 ➢ How did your family talk about the usefulness of education for Black Americans?
 ➢ Most of you said that your parents wanted you to do better than they did, describe to us in what ways did they share this with you?

❖ One Minute Paper (6:10 – 6:13PM) [3 mins.]
 ➢ How important was believing in yourself and self-accountability to your school success?

❖ Discussion on Education Overall (6:13 – 6:30PM) [17 mins.]
 ➢ What are your thoughts on success/achievement being a White thing?
 ➢ Does multicultural competence stimulate your overall success?

❖ One Minute Paper (6:30 – 6:33PM) [3 mins.]
 ➢ In college, what type of community were you looking for?

❖ Discussion on College (6:33 – 6:53PM) [20 mins.]
 ➢ In college, what things did you consciously do to avoid the negative effects of racism?
 ➢ Did you ever consider leaving or dropping out of college? If so, for what reason?
 ➢ If you transferred, why did you transfer?
 ➢ What impacts did it have on your ability to continue school?

❖ Closing (6:53-6:58PM) [5 mins.]

Final phrase: Say one phrase that sums up how your parents contributed to your college success.
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