A Fly in Milk: The Urban Black Experience at a Rural White Institution

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Abstract

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A Fly in Milk: The Urban Black Experience at a Rural White Institution

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The United States Supreme Court issued a decision in the case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas (1954) that declared segregation based on race was not constitutional. In the context of higher education, this decision opened doors for many Blacks to gain entrance into colleges and universities across the nation. In the half-century since Brown, research clearly indicates Blacks enrolled at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) have different and varied experiences when compared to their White counterparts.

This study explored the complicated array of academic, social, cultural and personal factors successful African American students face at a rural PWI. Through qualitative methodology and the framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) their perception, place and the means by which they adjust to this environment are examined. Moreover, the study focuses on the academic, social, cultural and personal schooling processes of successful urban African American students using a phenomenological case study approach. The sample in this study consists of ten participants, 7 current and 3 former recipients of the Urban Scholars Scholarship Program. From an analysis of data, four major themes emerged in relation to the urban Black experience at a rural PWI: (1) the castaways, (2) capital one rewards, (3) reducing toxic threats and (4) the alien among
us. Practical implications for student affairs staff, university leaders, cultural centers and retention offices are included.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Adah L. Ward Randolph

Professor of Educational Studies
To Zechariah, my forever love...
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* (1954), left many Americans understanding that a chapter in history was being re-written when the United States (U.S.) Supreme Court declared that segregation based on race was not constitutional. For postsecondary education, this decision meant that doors once closed to Blacks, due to rigorous admission policies, were now open. In the half-century since *Brown*, Blacks are enrolled in predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Harvey, Harvey & King, 2004) and presented with very different experiences when compared to their White counterparts (Davis et al., 2004; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Taylor & Olswang, 1997).

Although the U.S. forges the way in terms of diverse nations, according to Morrison (2010), it remains one of the most divided in relation to race, class, privilege and power - with these disparities displaying remarkable evidence throughout the K-16 pipeline (Milner, 2008a; Rogalsky, 2009; Rury, 2005; Weiner, 2003). In fact, Eimers and Pike (1997) suggests that literature paints a nihilistic picture of a continual gap between the rates of postsecondary attainment for students of color indicating they are academically, culturally and economically behind their White counterparts. Although research illustrates varied experiences of Blacks in higher education, an examination of their co-curricular experiences is noteworthy of attention. This study seeks to examine the complicated array of academic, social, cultural and personal factors that urban Blacks face while attending a rural PWI.
Statement of the Problem

In 1988, the American Council on Education (ACE) estimated that minority groups in the U.S. made-up 25% of the overall population and by the year 2050 the U.S. Census Bureau (2003) projects over 50% of the population will consist of individuals from cultural and ethnic groups who differ from the White majority. According to Davis et al. (2004), these demographic shifts are reflected on many college campuses with an increase in the number of minority students. As such, demographics shifts in the larger society have prompted postsecondary institutions to focus on college access and persistent initiatives among minority students (Kim & Rury, 2007). Driven by an increasingly diverse society, a growing economy and a globally competitive society, researchers and policy makers have focused research efforts on explicating minority attainment gaps related to student access, recruitment and persistence (ACE, 2009; Massey, Charles, Lundy, & Fischer, 2003; Morris, 2004; Nettles & Perna, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c). According to Eimers and Pike (1997), while postsecondary institutions can talk about recruiting minorities, relatively few can say the same related to student persistence.

Even though many consider Brown the benchmark when referencing Blacks gaining access to higher education, these efforts can be traced to the early nineteenth century. For instance, the first African American to receive a Bachelor’s degree from a PWI was John Russwurm, who, in 1826, received his degree from Bowdin College in Maine (Williamson, 2003). According to Williamson (2003), from 1826 to 1890 approximately thirty Blacks graduated from northern institutions; by 1910 less than seven hundred Blacks were enrolled; by the late 1920s fifteen hundred Blacks had graduated
from White institutions. By the 1930s and 1940s Williamson (2003) reports a clear pattern of complete segregation of the races in higher education. For instance, in the late 1930s Lloyd Lionel attempted to enroll at the University of Missouri School Of Law since a law school for Blacks did not exist in the state. In *Gains v. Canada*, Gains applied to the University of Missouri School of Law in 1936 and was denied admission by Sy Woodson Canada, the registrar, based on the grounds of Missouri’s Constitution calling for separate education for the races. Two years later, in 1938, the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision, in favor of Gains, paved the way for multiple cases that led to the decision of *Brown* (The Curators of the University of Missouri, 2009).

Additional cases followed the *Gaines* case, with many Supreme Court cases involving Blacks who were interested in attaining advanced degrees in the South. In 1948, the Courts heard *Sipuel v. Board of Regents*, where Ada Lois Sipuel was not granted admission to The University of Oklahoma Law School. In 1950, *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* did not grant admission of George McLaurin to the University of Oklahoma; and during the same year, Heman Marion Sweatt in *Sweatt v. Painter* was not granted admission to the University of Texas Law School) (Williamson, 2003). A watershed moment developed in 1954 when the Supreme Court declared the Fourteenth Amendment was applicable to all American citizens. This decision not only addressed educational inequalities, segregation and discrimination at the K-12 levels, but it also had broader implications for Blacks attending post secondary institutions.

Since the advent of *Brown*, higher education has responded to concerns of access by modifying admission and recruitment initiatives and creating outreach programs
(Massey et al., 2003). Similarly, federal and state initiatives have been established to improve access to higher education through financial aid and early intervention outreach programs (Domina, 2009). While providing various modalities of support to underrepresented students in higher education, an immense amount of attention has focused on the experiences and educational processes of Black males at a secondary level (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010), women at the postsecondary level, (Landry, 2003; Banks, 2009) and Blacks and minorities in higher education (ACE, 2011; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Fleming, 1984; Grier-Reed, Madyun, & Buckley, 2008; Morrison, 2010; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Sedlacek, 1999; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2001; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998).

Although research does give attention to high achieving Blacks (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Perry, 2003; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Steele, 2003), an explication of the value and richness of racial and cultural diversity (Frank, 2003) from the students perspective should be ensued, especially related to differing institutional types (e.g. Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) including , Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), PWIs and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). While formal and informal barriers preventing women, minorities and Blacks from attaining higher levels of education have been examined extensively, issues related to high achieving urban Blacks in higher education have received relatively little attention. According to Morris (2004), researchers have been casual in examining successful urban students of color, the communities they reside in and their agency as they aspire and persist in secondary and postsecondary institutions, in
spite of racial inequalities. When educational research is considered this means combining the limitations that have defined many experiences of Blacks in higher education with the strengths and insights gained from the more recent studies of education. Although documentation of school experiences has grown, Butchart (1988) suggests this knowledge has primarily served “the owners of the world” (p. 360) which has left many areas inadequately explored. Hence, since the development of urban sprawls, urban education must be contextualized in its entirety.

**Purpose of Study**

The central purpose of this study is to understand the academic, social, cultural and personal schooling processes of successful urban Blacks using a phenomenological case study approach. Moreover, this study seeks to evoke the narrative perspectives of urban Blacks about their processes of negotiation in higher education within the context of a rural PWI. This research explores educational experiences, from participant perspectives and from their own definitions and perspectives, and presumes that most higher education systems in the U.S. are literally and figuratively Eurocentric places and spaces (Banks, 2009; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Kurlaender & Flores, 2005; Willie, 2003), meaning they are embedded with White norms, values and traditions and are widely associated with Whiteness (Gillborn, 2005; Harris 1995). For Blacks pursuing higher education who do not possess privileges associated with Whiteness, this combination can result in many challenges (Banks, 2009; Ferguson 2000; Fordham, 1996). At the very least this study requires that special attention be given to the unique work successful urban Black students undertake in their academic and social learning
spaces. This study is not concerned with an explication of all Blacks attending PWIs; however, the focus is on the educational processes of urban students who successfully navigated the K-12 school system and are matriculating or have matriculated through a rural PWI. Moreover, this inquiry does not lend itself to the deficit model of student achievement, rather it examines the academic, social and cultural processes of successful urban Blacks who are former and current recipients of the merit based scholarship program - The Urban Scholars Program.

Designed to increase Ohio University’s diversity profile, the Urban Scholars Program provides support for graduates from urban public school districts across the state of Ohio (i.e. Akron/ Youngstown, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus and Dayton), who demonstrate excellent academic achievement and financial need (Ohio University, 2010a). By examining the educational processes of Urban Scholars, this study seeks to (1) explicate the secondary experiences of urban Blacks which impacts their postsecondary experiences, (2) examine the co-curricular learning experiences and personal development of urban Blacks attending a rural PWI, and (3) examine how urban Blacks perceive their place in a rural predominantly White place and space and the means by which they adjust to this environment.

**Significance of Study**

Each year as thousands of students apply to postsecondary institutions, ways to increase access for underrepresented groups tend to be a priority for both state and federal policymakers (Gladieux, 2004; Gladieux, King, & Corrigan, 2005; Thelin, 2004). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2008) School Enrollment - Social and Economic
Characteristics of Students Report, 92.9% of Black children between the ages of 5 and 6 years old were enrolled in school. This is significant in that according to multiple ACE reports (1988, 2009, 2011), minority students will continue through primary and secondary public schools and aspire to attend postsecondary institutions. As student move through the K-16 educational pipeline, understanding their educational experiences and processes in a cultural context could prove useful for varying institutional types working proactively to prepare for a more diverse student body and campus community. In addition, this data could strengthen K-16 education initiatives that support diverse students who are first generation, low income college students.

Arguments for the proposed study were framed by the historical prohibition of formal education for Blacks grounded by enslavement and by the context of limited access to higher education due to racism (Anderson, 1978; Anderson, 1988; Butchart, 1988; Carroll, Fulton, Abercrombie, & Yoon, 2004; DuBois, 1935/ 1992; DuBois, 1973; Fairclough, 2007; Irons, 2002; Kluger, 1975; O’Brien, 2007; Patterson, 2001; Sitkoff, 1993; Spring, 2007; Williams, 2005; Woodson, 1933/ 2005). Also, this study was framed by the more contemporary discussions outlining the challenges that Blacks face in higher education (Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984; Gossett, Cuyjet, & Cockriel, 1998; Harvey et al., 2004; Inwood & Yarbrough, 2010; Lett & Wright, 2003; Morrison, 2010; Sedlacek, 1999; Sedlacek, 1987; Spring, 2007; Steele, 1997; Steele, 1999; Steele, 2003; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003; Taylor & Olswang, 1997; Tinto, 1975; Wiggan, 2007; Willie, 2003).
In the 1960s, following *Brown*, Black recruitment to postsecondary institutions increased (Fleming, 1984) due to pressure from social movements occurring outside of universities that altered educational policy, curricular, admission and recruitment efforts of Blacks (Williamson, 2003). These movements caused institutions to take notice of the pressing needs of Black students (Williamson, 2003). For instance, in her work, *In Defense of Themselves: The Black Student Struggle for Success and Recognition at Predominantly White Colleges and Universities*, Joy Williamson (1999) documented various support structures that Black students created to guarantee their psychological and academic well being while attending The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which included Black Student Unions (BSU), Black Studies Department, and separate campus facilities for Black students.

For Blacks who enroll and matriculate through PWIs, their educational experiences are often paved with successes, challenges and difficulties (Morrison, 2010). Exacerbated by variables of race, culture, socioeconomic status and geographical locale, understanding issues related to access and persistence becomes complex due to a myriad of external and internal factors. For urban youth characterized as low income, first generation college students, they present with diminished chances of gaining access to higher education (Astin, 1982; St. John, 2003; Swail & Perna, 2002; Tebbs & Turner, 2006; Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002; Yosso, Parker, Solórzano & Lynn, 2004). As educators commit themselves to the success of all students, it is critical that an accurate understanding of the educational processes of successful urban African American students be explicated through the recollection of its members and by considering the
broader contextual factors which impact their educational processes. This is an important first step in initiating dialogue, shaping policy, counseling students and creating infrastructures and initiatives that assist in the academic, social, cultural and emotional support of these students. According to Allen (1992), successful and complete college matriculation and graduation of African American students who attend PWIs are hinged upon the support and advocacy from peer groups, sustained faculty/staff relations, social and emotional support, and career preparation. What have those factors been for the Urban Scholars at Ohio University? How can we learn to provide better support to ensure the success of African American students beyond the Urban Scholars Program? By examining the contextual nature of urban education at the secondary level and the educational experiences of Urban Scholars at the postsecondary level, participants are able to name their own reality in a culturally reaffirming way, whereby aiding teacher-educators and campus leaders in understanding pedagogy and educational practices that work toward fostering and maintaining academic success. Collectively, these narratives deviate from the traditional deficit line of inquiry and seek to understand how successful urban Blacks matriculate through a rural PWI.

By providing a space for the co-construction of this knowledge, the polyvocalness of these collective voices serve as a framework for students (e.g. Appalachians, Whites, International, and underrepresented) who attend similar institutional types (i.e. rural fringes, PWI) and have similar co-curricular experiences, in understanding how to successfully navigate postsecondary institutions. The stories and counterstories provided by these faces at the bottom (Bell, 1992) compliment quantitative data regarding the
experiences of Blacks in higher education and provide useful baseline data for campus leaders developing initiatives and infrastructures to support structural and interactional diversity in and outside of the classroom. Furthermore, this collective body of data may be used to reshape institutional policy, which includes but is not limited to, affirmative action policies, university recruitment and persistence initiatives and cultural programming needs, while serving as a corrective approach for generalizing stereotypical attributes to all students of color.

Recently, Banks (2009) conducted a study examining the educational experiences of Black female undergraduates and how they negotiate higher education. Participants in this study were from different institutional types (i.e. 2-year, 4-year) and were located in the Northeast, New York City, California and a University along the International border of Mexico. The current study extends Banks’ (2009) study in that it is (1) not gender specific but inclusive of the urban Black male experience and it (2) includes successful urban Black students who are current and former recipients of a merit based scholarship attending a rural PWI. Although the motivation for understanding the educational experiences of Blacks in higher education may be driven by social, political and institutional need, the significance of the current study draws attention to the impact of the intersection of variables relative to geographic location, culture and institutional type and its overall effect on student engagement and persistence.

**Research Questions**

Interviewing successful urban Blacks attending a rural PWI lends itself to making visible both the similarities and differences in their educational experience, social,
cultural and gendered markers. Unlike studies that examine the role of gender in the lives of Black women (Banks, 2009; Landry, 2003), this study examines race, culture and gender and includes successful urban Black males. It addressed the following research questions dealing specifically with the urban Black experience of the participants at a rural PWI that the academic body of knowledge will be expanded:

1. How do Urban Scholars at Ohio University, perceive or understand their own co-curricular achievement as it relates to their college matriculation?
2. What role does race, culture and gender play in their conception of achievement? and
3. What were the experiences of former Urban Scholars?

Through these 3 research questions, the researcher sought to gain a better understanding of the norms, values, traditions, challenges and distinct aspects of the university community and its role in supporting the co-curricular success of urban youth as part of the rural university community. Although participant narratives lend themselves to understanding the educational processes, through a phenomenological qualitative case study, narratives also present issues not yet understood in the extant literature on urban youth who successfully matriculate through higher education.

Design of Study and Methodology

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest that phenomenology carries many degrees of meaning for theory and methods. For purposes of this study, the utility of this methodology focuses on the everyday meaning and experiences with the overall goal of explicating how successful urban African American students make sense of their lived
experiences. This qualitative process allows the researcher to examine the co-curricular experiences of urban Blacks and make sense of and interpret their lives and the meaning from the students’ perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). Explicating the educational experiences of all urban Blacks attending a rural PWI is beyond the scope of the current research study. Rather, the researcher supports that [urban] Black or Blackness is not monolithic (Fleming, 1984) and there are multiple ways of knowing (Glesne, 2006). This interpretive approach further lends itself to making meaning of realities which are socially constructed; therefore, multiple stories will be told about a single social phenomenon that produces a polyvocal text - one that has many voices in conjunction with the interpretive voice of the researcher (Glesne, 2006).

Case study, as described by Stake (2005), is not methodological in nature, but it is a preference of what is being studied. Additional scholars define case study as a mere strategy of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Merriam, 1997) or research involving “the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). For purposes of this study, the researcher supports the latter argument and found case study to be a qualitative approach whereby a bounded system in terms of time, events and processes (Creswell, 2007) were explored. Several features mark the current research as a bounded case study:

- The case for the current study is successful Black Urban Scholars and their perceptions of their co-curricular experiences at a rural PWI.
- This case is a bounded system, bounded by time (3 months of data collections) and place (situated on a single campus, located in a rural geographical location).
- Multiple sources of information (triangulation) in data collection provide a detailed in-depth picture of the co-curricular experiences of Urban Scholars (i.e. interviews, document analysis and member checks to validate responses).

- The context or setting for the case is a rural PWI.

**Methodology**

Within social science research a persuasive reason to carry out qualitative interviews centers around ways in which people interpret the world and their place within the world (Patton, 2002). As such, qualitative researchers are interested in examining naturally occurring interactions and the perspectives of informants accurately (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). It is critical to note here, that without the methodology of qualitative interviews, the stories, analysis and interpretations would be difficult to access since qualitative inquiry and research is an inductive practice where theory emerges from the collected data and not a set of formulated hypotheses (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, this methodology allows the researcher to elicit participants’ meanings for events and behaviors, generate a typology of categories of meaning and highlight the nuances of culture (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Through constant comparison, explorations of context, categories reading and transcription, the researcher had an opportunity to authentically re-present the perspectives of the informants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

**Site Selection - Ohio University**

Ohio University (OU) is a public federally funded research institution located in Athens, Ohio. It is the largest city in the county seat of Athens County, Ohio, and it is the oldest university in the Northwest Territory, located along the Hocking River in the southeastern part of Ohio (Hollow, 2003). Despite being located in a rural [fringe] area
the university prides itself on having a Carnegie classification of high research activity (Office of Institutional Research, 2010). According to OUs 2010 Fact Book, 17,245 undergraduate students enrolled on the main campus while 9,712 undergraduate students enrolled on the regional campuses (Chillicothe, Eastern, Lancaster, Pickerington, Southern, Proctorville, and Zanesville) for a total student enrollment of 26,957, and 4.5% self identified as African American (Office of Institutional Research, 2010). The majority of students are full time, undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 24, with an equal representation of women (50%) and men (50%) seeking degrees. In 2009, 17,520 or 88% of the students enrolled at the Athens campus were Ohio residents with the greatest number of students coming from Cuyahoga County, the most populous county in Ohio (Office of Institutional Research, 2010).

A rural PWI in the state of Ohio will lend itself to answering the aforementioned research questions. The university in question is not a center of cosmopolitan influence located in southeastern Ohio; however, it does attract Black students from the most [urban] populous County in the state of Ohio - Cuyahoga County. By considering similar institutional types across the state, this study may provide data with less region-bound generality (Fleming, 1984) where the regional environment (i.e. Appalachia Ohio) influences the college environment. For instance, Cleveland State University, located in an urban area, recently opened a Center for Urban Education that conducts research on urban education policy (Cleveland State University, 2011); whereas Ohio University, located in a rural area has the Coalition of Rural and Appalachian Schools (CORAS) designed to identify and analyze policy issues that improve educational opportunities for
students in the CORAS region (Ohio University, 2011b). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2009a) reports Cleveland State University had a fall, 2009 African American enrollment of 21% - the highest in the state of Ohio. Conversely, OU had a fall, 2009 African American enrollment of 5% - the lowest in the state of Ohio. According to the Office of Institutional Research (2010), trend data for African American student enrollment at OU shows a slight increase of 1.9% from 2003 - 2009. Thus, only a few urban scholarship recipients have been enrolling long enough to have a population large enough to sample.

**Limitations of Study**

Similar to all research studies, the current research presents with limitations. First, the proposed study is limited in that it examines the educational schooling processes of successful urban Blacks in one setting. Hence, the generalization of data from this study must be discussed as it relates to the population of this study. Furthermore, this study might contribute to a deeper understanding of the rationale for and the sustainability of scholarship programs for underrepresented populations.

An additional limitation involves not observing participants in both their academic and social settings aside from qualitative interviews. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2002), triangulation provides a broader picture by combining dissimilar methods of data collection and it provides the researcher with a means of constantly comparing data gathered using a multiple collection of techniques as part of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).
Although the current study presented with limitations, this qualitative methodology sought to explore this particular case for its uniqueness. Due to limitations, results from the current study do not allow for generalization, they may allow for transferability. Moreover, its findings are important given that most research based PWIs are geographically located in rural settings (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009b). For instance, University Park is home to The Pennsylvania State University; Iowa State University is located in Ames, Iowa and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is geographically located in a rural area (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009b).

**Definition of Terms**

To set parameters for the current study an operational definition of terms is warranted. This section includes an operational portrayal of key words which are used repetitively throughout the study. In the section that follows, the formal definition of terms is followed by an interpretation of how the term is used in the current study. A definition of key terms connotes a vocabulary that enhances the understanding of how language or terms and their meanings are used within a study. In the current study, the terms, meanings and significance are explicated.

*Access.* In the 21st century the term college access suggests entry into postsecondary education, as well as a myriad of challenges for underrepresented and low-income students (McPherson & Schapiro, 2006). Researchers contend that factors related to tuition costs, racial discrimination, social disadvantages and lack of adequate academic preparation have contributed to the vast underrepresentation of students enrolling in most
state flagship universities (Hagedorn & Tierney, 2002; Tebbs & Turner, 2006). For many middle- and low- income families, the most significant barrier to postsecondary education is related to cost (Tebbs & Turner, 2006). St. John (2003) differentiates between college access and financial access by defining the latter as the ability to afford continuous enrollment in low-cost two year and four year programs based on one’s ability and prior performance.

Co-curricular. Since higher education is a two-tier experience inclusive of academic and social components, Chen, Ingram, and Davis (2007) suggest that academic gains made inside the classroom are equally important as social gains received outside the classroom. In keeping with Astin’s (1993) theory of student involvement and Tinto’s (1993) model of academic and social integration, a number of co-curricular activities include informal gatherings of students outside of the classroom which promote academic and social integration.

Counterstorytelling. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) define counterstorytelling as “writing that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority” (p. 144). Dissimilar to counterstories are the traditional social science theoretical models which often explain educational inequalities through what Solórzano and Yosso (2002) refer to as majoritarian stories - also known as monovocals, master narratives and standard stories. Through stories and counterstories told by Blacks, the centrality of experiential knowledge serves to challenge mainstream assumptions and discourse (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Milner, 2008a).
Capital. Capital, as noted by Bourdieu (1977), assumes 3 different forms. First, economic capital can be transmitted into money or financial capital. Next, cultural capital can be exchanged into economic capital, which can be manifested in educational credentials. Finally, social capital can be characterized as building social networks and connections. According to Perry, Steele, and Hilliard (2003), academic success is connected to cultural and economic capital since both have an exchange value. Perry (2003) further states

Cultural capital is socially inherited cultural competence that facilitates achievement in school….It is important to realize that for Bourdieu the mechanism for distributing economic opportunity resides in the academic culture….Accordingly, schools transmit knowledge in cultural codes, which afford automatic advantages to those who already possess cultural and linguistic capital and disadvantages to those who possess little or no cultural capital. The existing educational system, given its interrelationship with the dominant culture and the close affinity between the dominant and the academic cultures has already picked the winners (p. 67-68).

In the current study, participants use different forms of capital in various contexts to gain access to institutional structures. For instance, students accrue and use social, intellectual, cultural, navigational and linguistic capital to supplement their educational experiences while matriculating through a rural PWI (Yosso, 2005).

Minority. For purposes of this study, the term minority is not simply relegated to a numerical minority. Rather, it includes any subgroup in relation to dominant [White] culture. Spring (2007) recognizes dominated groups as African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latino/Latina Americans and Native Americans. Hence, the utility of the term minority includes those who have been prone to differential treatment in the societies in which they live (Spring, 2007).
Noncognitive variables. Apart from the traditional verbal and quantitative areas generally measured by standardized exams, noncognitive variables are associated with how students adjust to postsecondary institutions and their level of motivation and perception. While noncognitive variables are useful for all students, they are particularly significant for students of color, since standardized tests and grade point averages (GPA) provide a one dimensional view of student performance. According to Sedlacek (1987), noncognitive variables are inclusive of leadership experiences, community involvement, knowledge gained in a field or discipline, accessibility to strong support persons, preference for long term goals, realistic self appraisal, successfully navigating the system and positive self concept.

Predominantly White Institutions. Feagin et al. (1996) define PWIs as a traditional White college where there is a one-way assimilation process whereby Blacks adapt to White views, norms and practices. These authors further suggest that PWIs are demographically White, as well as White in their culture and climate. According to Feagin et al. (1996), this monochromatic culture continues to pose difficult choices for Blacks who choose to stay or leave a White dominated college environment.

Stereotype Threat. Steel (2003) defines stereotype threat as “the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype” (p. 111). It is critical to note that any population is vulnerable to stereotypes and can suffer the effects of stereotype threat; however, since many stereotypes about Blacks are enforced through media and other printed and visual texts, Black students are more likely to encounter and confront them in
many aspects of their life. Over time, these perceived threats begin to take an emotional, psychological and sometimes physically taxing toll on Blacks (Steele, 2003).

**Student Success/ Engagement.** According to Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2006), student success is defined as “academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational objectives, and post college performance” (p.1). According to Kuh et al. (2006), a host of studies have examined student success. Furthermore, Kuh et al., (2006) assert that success can be defined based upon a student’s level of engagement or the extent to which they partake in educationally effective practices (Kuh et al., 2006). One of the earliest pairings of the term engagement is defined as encompassing student actions and behaviors and “refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (Astin, 1984, p. 297). Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) describe the grave impact the college experience has on students and suggests the greater a student’s involvement or engagement in academic work the better their knowledge acquisition and general cognitive development.

**Urban.** At the most basic level, Gottdiener (1985) states that urban is defined as a measure of space. In addition, The U.S. Census Bureau (2009) define urban as spaces that have a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile and census blocks in close proximity, that have at least 500 people per square mile. All territories, populations and housing units located in these spaces are considered urbanized areas (UA) or urban clusters (UC). For purposes of this study, the defining characteristics of
urban territories are significant since culture is embedded within geographical spaces and places. As such, this lens allows for an interpretation of the symbolic nature of the urban landscape, while giving specific attention to the meanings embedded in the landscape used to advance or retard the attainment of political social gains (Kaplan, Wheeler, & Holloway, 2009). As noted by Obiakor and Beachum (2005), urban areas have certain characteristics that have far-reaching implications for urban schools and urban education. These areas are densely populated and increasingly inhabited by ethnically diverse people who are often affected by poverty (Obiakor & Beachum, 2005).

*Urban Schools.* According to Obiakor and Beachum (2005), urban schools are located in urban environments, reflect the larger society, are bureaucratic, hierarchical in nature and are convoluted by issues of race and class. Furthermore, Noguera (2004) adds that urban schools are more likely to be populated by students of color (i.e. Black Latino/Latina). Although there are many facets to understanding and defining urban education one of the more underlying lynchpins is its specific geographical location.

**Overview of Dissertation**

This research is divided into 8 chapters. Chapter 1 provided an introduction and background to the study, statement of the problem, and the purpose and significance of the study. Chapter 2 presented a review of the literature related to access to higher education, history of African American education and urban education. Embedded in this literature are the educational experiences of Blacks, underrepresented groups and minority students attending PWIs. The cultural experiences of Black college students, their interactions with peers, faculty and staff and the skills obtained to achieve success
are explored. A contextual analysis of the current state of urban education will inform educational praxis, and add a richer dialogue to the on-going issue of educational reform for Blacks attending secondary and postsecondary institutions. Chapter 3 focused on the methodology, research design and data analysis procedures. Specifically, this chapter makes a case for the research methodology and design, while providing an in-depth look at the utility of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the theoretical framework of choice. In this chapter research participants, site location/setting, sampling plan, and data collection/analysis are all discussed.

Chapter 4 examined the educational disparities, namely that of per pupil expenditures, at the secondary level, which create dual systems of education for urban youth and their suburban counterparts. Chapter 5 took a close look at the pre-college experiences of Urban Scholars, inclusive of the urban environmental context and the urban schools they attended. Providing this context is critical since urban students do not enter higher education tabula rasa. Rather, they begin matriculation with various educational trajectories, including but not limited to academic backgrounds, socioeconomic and educational influences - all which shape perceptions, attitudes and expectations. A contextual analysis of secondary educational experiences is critical in understanding the broader context of student access, engagement and persistence at the postsecondary level.

Chapter 6 examined the co-curricular experiences of Urban Scholars and the impact race, class, gender and culture have in the context of a rural PWI. A close look at how students navigate the college choice process and the variables that influences these
processes is examined. Chapter 7 examines the overlapping effects of what occurs when urban culture converges with the institutional culture of a PWI. This section illustrated how urban students responded to and negotiated their experiences with atmospheric threats and racial microaggressions in social and academic spaces. Finally, chapter 8 concludes with the research findings. The original research questions presented in Chapter 1 were answered individually and were highlighted by narrative illustrations. Emergent themes are addressed, in relation to the research findings. Conclusions, implications and future recommendations are discussed.
Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

Access to Higher Education

History of Access

College access encompasses entry into postsecondary institutions, as well as financial access - a challenge that many underrepresented and low-income students face (McPherson & Schapiro, 2006). Researchers contend that factors related to tuition costs, racial discrimination, social disadvantages and lack of adequate academic preparation have contributed to the vast underrepresentation of these students enrolling in many state flagship universities (Hagedorn & Tierney, 2002; Tebbs & Turner, 2006). In fact, for many middle- and low-income families, the most significant barrier to postsecondary education is cost related (Tebbs & Turner, 2006). As noted by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (as cited in Cronin & Horton, 2009), the cost of college tuition, including fees, have increased by 440% over the past twenty-five years. This translates into 4 times the rate of inflation and approximately 2 times the increasing cost of health care.

Understanding the history of college access provides significant contextual information in understanding the contemporary experiences of Blacks in higher education. Since the 1950s, equal access to higher educational attainment has been a burgeoning topic of discussion for the U.S. (Singell & Stone, 2007). According to Altbach (2005), after World War II postsecondary education expanded in every country in the world, but not without a systemic nature of access that continued to increase. In the immediate postwar period, European nations designed higher education to
accommodate the elite. Due to complexities associated with modern societies and
economics, which called for a more highly trained workforce, the U.S. was noted for universal higher education (Altbach, 2005; Singell & Stone, 2007).

As postsecondary institutions moved from elite to universal education, a noted pressure of providing quality training for individuals to competently enter the workforce was evident. Beginning with the Civil War, the thirty-seventh Congress was responsible for several landmark legislative acts (Westmeyer, 1997). As the federal government took a leadership role in U.S. higher education, the Morrill Land Grant Act (MLGA) transformed higher education and establishment of many colleges across the country. Under the MLGA of 1862, the federal government distributed land proportionately to every state with at least one college devoted to agriculture and the mechanic arts (Westmeyer, 1997). Following emancipation and during Reconstruction, few southern states made provisions for Blacks to attend public postsecondary institutions; however, when Congress enacted the second MLGA of 1890 (the Agricultural College Act of 1890) this Act increased the endowment of support for land-grant colleges, allowing Blacks to benefit from the monies whereby they attended separate but equal postsecondary institutions (Wallenstein, 2008). By providing access to higher education the MLGA of 1862 and 1890 facilitated social mobility, strengthened democracy and aimed towards Blacks and Whites receiving equal apportionment of funds (Wallenstein, 2008; Westmeyer, 1997).

In the early history of postsecondary education, access remained a controversial topic since it was structured to accommodate the elite, wealthier segments of society
(Hagedorn & Tierney, 2002). As noted by Altbach (2005), the expansion of higher
education from elite to massive to universal education included provisions and access for
lower-income groups in the form of government sponsored loans and grants programs. In
spite of provisions (i.e. financial access), racial/ethnic minorities still remained
underrepresented in the student population (ACE, 2009). To increase enrollment of
underrepresented students and minorities, several programs and policies were
implemented.

During the 1940s and 1950s the GI Bill supported college access for thousands of
men and women; however, students taking advantage of this opportunity still confirmed
the conservative nature American postsecondary institutions (Hagedorn & Tierney,
2002), relative to gender and race (Thelin, 2004). Although the Bill provided educational
opportunities across socioeconomic lines, the opportunities exceedingly favored White
men, leaving women and Black veterans making up a small percentage of the total GI
Bill enrollments. The foundational components of the GI Bill served as a model and
prelude to distinct higher education policy discussions, which laid the groundwork for the
Truman Commission on Higher Education (Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2005).

While the Truman Commission focused on providing access to postsecondary
education to the neediest (Bowen et al., 2005), it also highlighted tensions of racial
segregation in public schools that would eventually unfold in the 1954 landmark case of
Brown. Although the Truman Commission Report catapulted the federal government
into a national discussion about the state of higher education, it was state governments,
private foundations, and individual universities and colleges that were credited with
carrying out the Commission’s recommendations without national policy initiatives (Thelin, 2004).

A final program designed to improve educational resources for students aspiring to attend postsecondary institutions was the Higher Education Act of 1965. As policymakers and educators recognized the important role that postsecondary institutions played in preparing competent citizens for a global and competitive society, this Act provided necessary financial resources to assist in the preparation of students despite socioeconomic status. For instance, it increased federal money and created scholarships and low-interest loans for students (Lucas, 1994). Following this Act, Trow (2001) noted that postsecondary institutions experienced enrollment spikes in 1965; however, by 1971 enrollment trends began to taper off (Lucas, 1994). It is significant to note here, that while students had financial access to support their postsecondary educational needs, continual policy shifts over the next decade limited college access to postsecondary institutions due to growing pains and a structural overload rooted in demographic shifts (Trow, 2001).

During the transition from elite to massive higher education, postsecondary institutions were not plagued with structural overloads; however, Thelin (2004) notes a structural buckle when transitioning from massive to universal higher education. This shift illustrates that the U.S. was successful in building structures to accommodate students who aspired to attend college; however, postsecondary institutions were less than prepared to consume their new constituents. During the 1980s, access continued to decline for low-income students with an increased focus on loan programs and the
national profile indicate that of first-time freshmen more than half were enrolled at public community colleges (Thelin, 2004).

During periodic reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, Congress suggests that government do a better job of ensuring that students complete secondary education due to lower attainment rates. According to Gladieux et al. (2005), a debate over student performance and graduation rates currently focuses the nation’s attention on lower levels of educational attainment. Although policy makers and researchers understand the role of government in supporting equal access, Gladieux et al. (2005) reports that student aid dollars alone are not enough to ensure greater access to postsecondary institutions for underrepresented groups.

Pre-College Outreach Programs

The federal government has a formidable track record of making financial aid available to students through Pell grants, campus-based, and subsidized and unsubsidized loan programs (Hagedorn & Tierney, 2002). As such, the federal government plays an important role in the development of pre-college outreach and early intervention programs for low-income, first generation college students. Since 1965, federal education programs have targeted disadvantaged, underrepresented and first generation college students with high concentrations of poverty to improve their access to postsecondary institutions (Rumberger, 2007). For example, Upward Bound became part of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964. Four years later, in 1968, Talent Search and Upward Bound merged with student support services during the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (Fields, 2001; Gladieux et al., 2005; Swail & Perna, 2002).
Together these TRIO programs were particularly designed to assist economically disadvantaged students attending and completing college (Fields, 2001; Swail & Perna, 2002). An extension of these efforts ensued in 1998, when Congress established the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) when the Higher Education Act was reauthorized (Swail & Perna, 2002). These efforts extended college opportunity to low-income students and provided secondary institutions with financial incentives to ensure that all students were exposed to pre-college programs (Fields, 2001). More recently, Domina (2009) conducted a longitudinal large-scale experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation of college outreach programs and found these programs (e.g. TRIO, GEAR UP) make minimal impacts to alter the educational experiences of participating students. Furthermore, results from this study were noted as being “discouraging…pessimistic” (p. 147) and suggest that efficacy of outreach programs differ with student characteristics.

_Engagement and Persistence_

Research examining recruitment and persistence of undergraduate students has largely relied on the early work and theoretical model put forth by Vincent Tinto (1975) and Sedlacek (1987). The influential works of both Tinto (1975) and Sedlacek (1987) are relevant in that they both provide an underlying logic needed to support more contemporary approaches to understanding student recruitment and persistence. Over the past decade, research has examined student success (Allen, 1992; Astin, 1984; Banks, 2009; Callan et al., 2006; Chen, Ingram, & Davis, 2007; Davis et al., 2004; Fordham, 1996; Fries-Britt, & Turner, 2002; Kuh, et al., 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991;
Venezia et al., 2005; Williamson, 1999), which is broadly defined by Kuh et al. (2006) as student engagement or the degree to which students take part in educationally effective practices. One of the earliest pairings of the term engagement with learning outcomes are from researchers in the field of higher education - namely Astin (1984) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991). Astin (1984) defines engagement as encompassing student actions and behaviors and “refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (Astin, 1984, p. 297). Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) extends this concept of engagement and suggests that the greater a student’s involvement or engagement in academic work, the better they acquire knowledge and improve their cognitive development. When goodness of fit between student and institutional type are considered, issues of engagement become critical and affect institutional recruitment and persistence initiatives.

As stated by Tinto (1993), persistence is hinged upon a student’s perceived level of values, norms and ideas. As outlined in his theory of student departure, if college student’s values, norms and ideas closely align with those of the institution, this leads to better student adjustment and academic and social integration. On the other hand, students who perceive their values, norms and ideas as incongruent with the larger campus community experience greater difficulty integrating into the larger community and are less likely to persist. As noted by Tinto (1993), Black students face a unique set of challenges as they integrate socially and academically into larger institutional structures since their values, norms and ideas are incongruent to the larger Eurocentric campus climate.
In the early work of Sedlacek (1987), twenty years of research specific to Blacks attending PWIs conceptualized the utility of noncognitive variables in an attempt to capture current trends taking place as well as the educational processes of Blacks on White campuses. In fact, a review of the extant contemporary literature highlight a number of Sedlacek’s (1987) noncognitive variables and includes self-concept, support systems and realistic self-appraisal (Bourne-Bowie, 2000; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Frank, 2003; Landry, 2003). In a study conducted by Eimers and Pike (1997), designed to measure the college experiences of freshmen minority (i.e. African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic and Native Americans) and nonminority (i.e. White) students, results revealed minorities presented with lower levels of entering ability, fewer sources of external encouragement, lower levels of perceived affinity of values, academic, and social integration, and perceived lower institutional commitment than nonminority students.

In a study conducted by Landry (2003), results showed that women of color deal with the double jeopardy of experiencing two overlapping identities at the same time - race and gender. The lack of persistence for women in this study was attributed to personal barriers (lack of knowledge of how to achieve goals, fear, lack of self-esteem), socioeconomic barriers (poverty, lack of family support), intracultural barriers (role expectations, family responsibilities), and extra cultural barriers (teacher attitudes). Frank (2003) examined the recruitment and persistence of Blacks in Teacher Education programs. Results indicated that Black teacher candidates encounter institutional racism, were designated spokespersons for the entire Black race in classroom discussions,
questioned their cultural position in society and faced stereotypes and issues dealing with racial identity.

A collective review of the literature show that Blacks attending PWIs feel isolated (Ancis, Sedlacek & Mohr, 2000; Booker, 2007; Davis et al., 2004; Gossett et al., 1998; Taylor & Olswang, 1997), classify PWIs as hostile, unsupportive, unsympathetic and unwelcoming (Allen, 1992; Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984), while experiencing much discomfort and stress (Allen, 1992; Boykin & Jones, 2004; Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984; Gossett et al., 1998; Taylor & Olswang, 1997). Furthermore, Blacks experience low teacher expectations relative to academic achievement, less social integration and negative campus race relations at a much greater frequency when compared to their White peers (Boykin & Jones, 2004; Taylor & Olswang, 1997). As noted by Gossett et al. (1998), Black student isolation can be mitigated by creating a welcoming campus climate and by establishing positive and personal learning environments. A review of the literature indicates that researchers have examined Blacks and isolation using terms such as marginalization, alienation, connectedness, and relatedness (Ancis et al., 2000; Booker, 2007; Davis et al., 2004; Gossett et al., 1998; Taylor & Olswang, 1997).

Contemporary issues facing Blacks attending PWIs is not uncommon. In fact, historical accounts of African American education show a consistent pattern of student isolation based upon the social construction of race and the racialized body of Blacks. By understanding the myriad of issues Blacks face at PWIs, postsecondary institutions can assist Black students in being a fully integrated member into university communities through complete matriculation. External and internal factors affect a student’s ability to
complete a college degree (Kuh et al., 2006); however, specific to Blacks attending
PWIs, unique challenges germane to environment and climate appear to affect the
recruitment and persistence of this cadre of students. Despite the number of initiatives to
successfully recruit minorities to PWIs, the discrepancy between engagement and
satisfaction warrants further investigation.

According to Kuh et al. (2006), seventy-five percent of high school graduates
continue on to enroll in 1 of 5 different institutional types. (1) 2-year colleges (46%), (2)
public 4-year institutions (26%), (3) private 4-year institutions (15%), (4) for-profit
entities (10%) and (5) other types of school (3%). In the state of Ohio, documentation of
Black student enrollment at 4-year public institutions has been captured by The National
Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2009). (See Table 1).

Table 1. African American Student Enrollment in Ohio Universities (Fall 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Location</th>
<th>African American Student Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland State University</td>
<td>Cleveland, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngstown State University</td>
<td>Youngstown, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright State University</td>
<td>Dayton, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Akron</td>
<td>Akron, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Cincinnati</td>
<td>Cincinnati, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State University</td>
<td>Columbus, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio University</td>
<td>Athens, Ohio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The National Center for Educational Statistics (2009)
Each of the aforementioned schools offers financial access to minority and multicultural students in the form of scholarships as a way to increase the number of minorities on campus; however, none of the financial access opportunities specifically target urban students. For instance, Cleveland State University offers the LINK program as a recruitment and persistence tool to increase the minority student population (Cleveland State University, 2009). Given the geographical location, demographic make-up and urbanization of these areas (i.e. Cleveland, Youngstown, Dayton, Akron, Cincinnati, Columbus) it is plausible to believe the fall, 2009 enrollment data speaks to the unique and successful efforts of institutions to recruit African American students.

Unlike most of the postsecondary institutions listed in table 2, OU is located in a rural distant town and has the lowest enrollment of African American students when compared to universities located in Cleveland, Youngstown, Dayton, Akron, Cincinnati and Columbus. Ironically, OU continues to recruit minority students from one of the most populous urban areas in the state. According to OUs Office of Institutional Research (2010), the student distribution by [Ohio] county of residence reports that approximately 2,076 of 17,520 students enrolled during fall, 2009 from Ohio were from Cuyahoga County, the most populous county in Ohio. Cities located in Cuyahoga County include Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, Euclid, Parma, Shaker Heights and Solon. Given the demographic make-up of southeastern Ohio, this may explain the low number of Black student enrollment, which has experienced a slight increase of 1.9% over a six year period. (Ohio University Office of Institutional Research, 2010) (See Table 2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2003</th>
<th>Fall 2004</th>
<th>Fall 2005</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>923</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>1,061</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>224</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>355</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>1,107</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>1,044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,221</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>1,420</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>1,437</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ohio University Office of Institutional Research (2010)
These primary data sources are critical when examining the recruitment/enrollment, engagement and persistence patterns of minority enrollment at various institutional types. For instance, in 2004 the President of Ohio University, Roderick McDavis recognized the changes taking place in the larger society and attempted to align the institution to reflect societal demographics. Designed specifically to attract urban youth across the state to Ohio University, in May of 2004 The Urban Scholars Program was conceptualized and implemented to actively recruit and retain students from urban centers across the state and throughout the nation, who demonstrate excellent academic success by common measures and financial need (McDavis, 2004). As reflected in the historiography of Black education, a comparison of historical and contemporary issues facing Blacks in education reflect that educational attainment evolved differently for Blacks and their White counterparts.

**History of African American Education**

*The Rise of Universal Education*

To determine what Blacks did to provide education for themselves during the tumultuous times of slavery onward, the historiography of African American education in the U.S. through different historical periods lends itself to understanding the educational landscape from slavery to the first decade of freedom. This methodology allows for a thematic interpretation, the opportunity to recognize the agency among and within the Black community and the ability to know the value African American’s assigned to education prior to their emancipation and afterwards. During slavery, DuBois (1935/1992) reported that most slaves were isolated on country plantations and approximately
nine-tenths of four million Black slaves could neither read nor write. Under these conditions, “what the Negro did was wait, look and listen and try to see where his interest lie” (DuBois/ 1935/1992, p. 57). Historians such as James Anderson, Heather Williams, Ronald Butchart, W.E.B. DuBois, James Patterson, Richard Kluger, Adam Fairclough and Sheryll Cashin, tell the story of both historical and contemporary educational issues that face Blacks as they aspired to attain education. During the time following emancipation, a review of the literature suggests a continual struggle of power in the freed people’s quest to obtain equal education (Anderson, 1988; Fairclough, 2007; Williams, 2005).

It was during times of social mayhem where the relationships between education and power became evident - both economically and politically. Across the nation there were varying and persistent conflicts between and among southern Blacks, northern Blacks, northern Whites and southern Whites (Anderson, 1988). Following the emancipation, in 1863, Blacks joined the ranks of the nation’s free citizens as the public education system was simultaneously being developed into its modern form (Anderson, 1988). As free Blacks pressed for first-class citizenship, they were continually undermined by state and federal governments, disfranchised and placed in civil and political subordination by law (Anderson, 1988). To this end, Black education was imbued with politics, so much so, that the development of their education resulted in a starkly different trajectory from the rest of the American nation (Anderson, 1978; Anderson, 1988; Bell, 2004; Butchart, 1988; Boykin & Jones, 2004; Carroll et al., 2004; Cashin, 2004; Fairclough, 2007; Harvey et al., 2004; Williams 2005).
In the late 1870s and early 1880s, Anderson (1988) posits that a small number of southern Whites began to favor universal education for Blacks and as Blacks developed critical literacy skills, the initial illiteracy rate of 95% dropped to 70% in 1880 and dropped 30% by 1910 (DuBois, 1935/ 1992; Anderson, 1988). According to Butchart (1988), the overall improvements of literacy rates is attributed to (1) a fundamental belief in the value of a literate culture as freed-men made concerted efforts to secure schooling for themselves and their children, (2) the agency and autonomy of Blacks related to self-sufficiency, self-determination, self-reliance and (3) a deep desire to control their own schools while distinctively shaping the consciousness of Blacks about the importance of a literature culture. This display of commitment to achievement and advancement hardly ended with the demise of Reconstruction (Anderson, 1988).

Similar to Anderson (1988), Watkins (2001a) couches historical accounts of Black education as a conglomeration of historically, politically and socially constructed ideas. In his account of the history of Black education, Watkins (2001b) notes the power dynamics at play, along with the powerful economic forces that shaped Black education, contributed to the overall different funding, teacher training, administration and curriculum when compared to White education. Watkins (2001a) further illustrates that accommodationist-styled education and curriculum models (e.g. Eurocentric models) gained popularity with White architects of Black education (Watkins, 2001b), and continues to be a defining feature of Black education. In fact, Watkins, (2001a) suggests that this long-standing tradition over what Blacks learn have been a struggle and “contestation” (p. 40) as White architects of Black education carefully selected and
sponsored knowledge which contributed to obedience, servitude and political docility of Blacks. Nowhere is this more evident than when The Hampton Model of Normal School Industrial Education was established.

Even though the Hampton Institute was a model for other industrial schools, including Booker T. Washington’s well-known Tuskegee Institute, this concept was not widely supported by intellectuals throughout the Black community, who viewed this Model with suspicion (Anderson, 1988). Anderson (1988) posits that The Hampton-Tuskegee philosophy, which requested that southern Blacks refrain from political involvement and concentrate on economic development, was seen as a philosophy that disallowed for Black political awareness and engagement, while relegating Blacks to agricultural labor in the south. According to Anderson (1988) this determination of northern philanthropist and southern Caucasian political leaders spread this ideology, which positioned the dialogical debate over the struggle of the proper education for Blacks. The polemics of this debate continued unabated into the Civil Right era of segregation and integration with the case of Brown.

Brown vs. Board of Education

In the early 1950s, segregation based on race in U.S. public schools was customary and although most schools were considered equal, the structure of Black schools was far more inferior compared to schools attended primarily by Whites (Irons, 2002; Kluger, 1975; Patterson, 2001). On February 28, 1951, Linda Brown was an 8 year-old 3rd grader attending Monroe Elementary school in Topeka, Kansas, when Brown was filed (Irons, 2002). The litigants argued that segregated public schools were not
equivalent to other public schools and could not be made equal since Blacks were not equally protected under the law (Irons, 2002; Kluger 1975; Patterson, 2001). On May 17, 1954, the Courts ruled that segregation based on race was not constitutional. According to Marable (2007) though most states impacted by the decision believed their rights were violated, desegregation of public schools went unanswered for approximately one year. Following the initial decision of Brown, the Supreme Court determined on May 31, 1955 that states should carry out Brown I “with all deliberate speed” (Irons, 2002, p. xiii).

In Failures of Integration, Cashin (2004) argues that the tactic agreement to separate along the lines of class and race meant the experiences and privileges of Blacks and White would vary - depending on which side of the class and racial line you were born. Once integration took place, these privileges and differing experiencing became crystal clear. For instance, as noted by Futrell (2004), integrated schools in the south were impacted by the loss of a Black teaching workforce, which had a spillover effect on Black students who were not accustomed to an integrated environment and the liberal or progressive teaching style of White teachers (Futrell, 2004). For Black students, integration meant shifting from a kin-ship and culturally sensitive type communal school environment, to a competitive, frustrating and culturally insensitive environment (Futrell, 2004). First, without Black educators Black students were void of role models that instilled in them they could be successful academically. Next, the lack of Black counselors meant Black students were not advised to pursue the traditional academic curriculum, but rather were herded into nonacademic programs (e.g. tracking). Finally, the school environment was devoid of any cultural diversity reflecting Black student or
their history. Resultantly, the effects of these factors led many students to drop out of school, and vent their frustrations by being disruptive in the classroom, ultimately leading to students being “pushed out” (Futrell, 2004, p. 91).

As a result of the structural and organizational changes from integration, Black administrators were left without recourse. According to Ethridge (as cited in Futrell, 2004), by 1972 more than 50% of Black administrators were demoted or dismissed from their jobs; the lack of discipline had reached crisis proportions and a high incident of suspensions and punishment became common (Fairclough, 2007). In spite of the historical efforts of school integration and the associated challenges, public schools today are more segregated now than ever, with Blacks, Latinos and Latinas bearing the heaviest cost of Brown. To illustrate the educational practices of de facto segregated schools, Kozol (2006) examined the structural and economic conditions of these schools and noted unequal school funding formulas, overcrowded classrooms and unsanitary and often under staffed environments. In Kozol’s work (1991, 2006) he draws a parallel between the historical landmark case of Brown to the continuation of an unjust dual educational system in the 21st century.

In the 21st century, a great number of students from low-and moderate-income communities continue to attend racially isolated public schools that are all too often substandard structurally and economically. Although Black youth attend de facto racially integrated schools, according to Boykin and Jones (2004), their educational experiences often remain profoundly segregated by race, with these differential experiences being linked to lower academic outcomes and educational attainment levels. With the loss of
racial integration, Cashin (2004) suggests that separate educational tracks which vary greatly in quality, create serious costs to students attending them and their academic performance, including but not limited to racial discrimination.

_Racism/ Discrimination_

In recent years, research has widely documented the resurgence of racial/ethnic conflicts at institutions of higher education (Coker, 2003; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Patton, 2007; Hurtado, 1992;; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Morrison, 2010; Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas 1999; Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso 2001; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Swim et al., 2003; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003). In fact, Spring (2007), suggests that education is one of the nation’s most significant social institutions where the color line appears most clearly. Consistent with recurrent episodic forms of racism on a daily basis, surveys denote that Blacks are closely acquainted with acts of prejudice (negative attitudes about a group of people) and discrimination (denial of privileges and rewards of society to members of a group) (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). Interestingly enough these racial incidents have emerged during a time when public four-year colleges have initiated efforts to diversify their campuses (Altbach, 2005; Kim & Rury, 2007).

In his book, _Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality_, Spring (2007) illustrates the changing meaning of race throughout U.S. history and acknowledges that without a clear definition of race, racism becomes difficult to define. Spring (2007) acknowledges that race is widely recognized as a social construction, strongly influences
how individuals are perceived and defines race in concrete terms of “citizenship laws, education laws, and court rulings that are prejudicial toward a particular group of students” (p. 6). To this end, a number of studies have examined the frequency whereby Blacks experience racism at postsecondary institutions through retrospective self-report methods. In 1993, D’Augelli and Hershberger queried Blacks about the regularity with which they encounter explicit forms of prejudice, including verbal threats, violence and damage to their property. Eighty-nine percent of Blacks reported they heard racial remarks; 59% reported verbal assaults; and 36% reported incidence involving threats or violence.

Ancis et al. (2000) examined student perceptions of campus and institutional climate by race and discovered that Blacks perceived interracial strains and tensions on campus, reported less satisfaction with the institution and received negative assessment of their academic performance by faculty members. In a similar vein, Suarez-Balcazar et al. (2003) discovered that Blacks encounter more episodes of differential treatment in postsecondary institutions than when compared to their Hispanic, Asian and White counterparts. While Ancis et al. (2000) suggest that Blacks are more likely than Whites to be direct targets of direct, personal racism. Gossett et al. (1998) found that non-African American students were oblivious of the perceived discrimination experienced by their Black counterparts.

Coker (2003) used qualitative focus groups to gage the experiences of African American female adult learners in college. Results indicate that Black females encounter discrimination, negative stereotypes, prejudice and cultural misunderstandings. Using a
diary methodology, Swim et al. (2003) found that Black men and women reported an average of 1.24 incidents that they labeled probably or definitely prejudice, which translates to approximately one prejudicial incidence every other week. Participants further noted that racist incidents did not occur in public settings, but in intimate social gathering, which included intense looks, audible expressions of prejudice, terrible customer service in public restaurants and varied interpersonal offenses (i.e. Whites avoiding them on the street and in seating areas; rude or awkward encounters with Whites). Despite the nihilistic results from the aforementioned studies, Eimers and Pike (1997) found that students of color continue to persist in their college matriculation, displaying resiliency in the face of racism and discrimination.

In each of these studies Black students appeared to be more cognizant of racial tensions for varied reasons. For instance, historical reasons play a critical role in shaping this awareness as well as the constant interracial contact that Blacks make with Whites in various arenas such as social, academic and work related encounters while enrolled at PWIs. Perhaps there is no single element that contributes to a highly racialized campus climate; rather, there appears to be a configuration of external influences (i.e. historical and contemporary), structural factors (i.e. institutional size and type, institutional ideology), and social factors (i.e. group relations) that give birth to racial tensions at postsecondary institutions. Assessing racial climates of postsecondary institutions is an important first steps towards addressing issues related to race, racism, discrimination and prejudice as institutions work toward meeting the needs of Black students.
So far, the review of literature has outlined federal, state and local initiatives designed to increase access to postsecondary institutions for underrepresented students and it has illustrated the effects of school desegregation on educational attainment from the time of emancipation through *Brown*. Collectively, these historical and contemporary studies take a close look at ways to reduce the social distance (i.e. racism, class) as well as ways to reduce structural and/or institutional barriers of student access, engagement and persistence. Iron’s (2002) suggests that due to the criticism of conservatism, the current compulsory education system is more segregated according to race than it was prior to *Brown*. In fact, with current re-segregation trends, it appears as if the nation has drifted back towards segregation (or re-segregation). Instead of policy efforts bringing the races together, we have a stronger, yet noticeable difference along the lines of class and race. Nowhere is this more evident than in the K-12 public education system of urban schools.

**Urban Education**

One of the best ways to begin a discussion about urban education is to operationalize the definition of urban. Although urban analysts have not had much success in formulating a sound approach to studying urban space, at the most basic level urban has come to denote a measure of space (Gottdiener, 1985). The struggle to define urban space has impacted urban education research, which has portrayed urban space and place, including urban education in a negative context. This line of inquiry speaks to the failure of research to fully explicate the full range of contextual factors influencing urban schools and the students attending them. A delineation from the more traditional line of
inquiry, to an interdisciplinary approach, including sociology, economics, and geography, adds to the rich history of urban education and further contextualizes the process of urbanization. Since schools are largely defined by the proximity of surrounding social environments, space and place, this has a telling effect on educational practices within these spaces and places. The purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview of the process of urbanization, which includes a myriad of social, political and economic forces which have shaped urban geographical spaces and places.

History of Urbanization

The main modes of research and deliberation about cities are described by Rury and Mirel (1997) as ecological. Although this term began in the discipline of biology, contemporary usage of the term denotes a concern for the natural environment. In conjunction with urban studies, the focus shifts from ecology to ways the physical and social environments intersect to produce certain types of behavior that affects growth of urban communities (Rury & Mirel, 1997). Since the early 1900s changes associated with urban life revolved around the social and economic profile of the population. In the 1920s large American cities began assuming some of the dimensions of their contemporary form which was associated with the initial stages of suburbanization (Rury, 2005). With Black migration to northern industrial cities in the 1860s, Blacks began settling in densely populated areas in major American cities and it was during these years that suburbanization accelerated (Clotfelter, 2001). Following the decision of Brown a combination of urbanization and suburbanization gave rise to dramatic changes in interracial contact not only between resident living in these spaces, but between the
neighborhoods and schools they occupied (Clotfelter, 2001). Through most of the 1970s, the structural view of the ecological tradition shaped most of the research associated with urban geographic space - including education.

Although the early research outlining differences in geographical locations depicted urban problems as a natural consequence of urban development, the process of urbanization continues to produce outward urban sprawls (or the spreading outward of a city and its suburbs to the outskirts of a city), residential isolation and segregation, or racial and cultural isolation for minority groups who settle in specific geographical locations (Massey, 1984; Massey & Denton, 1993; Rury, 2005). More recent research in urban sociology represents a dramatic break from the traditional ecological model and is inclusive of how politics and power dynamics shape urban development. For instance, recent studies in urban development address challenges facing urban areas and urban schools concerning inequitable school funding practices, apartheid schools (characterized by 90-100% enrollment of non-White students) (Kozol, 2006), white flight (Fairlie & Resch, 2002; Ledwith & Clark, 2007; Zhang, 2008) and school choice and recruitment/retention of highly qualified teachers in urban areas (Clotfelter, 2001; Cole & Foster, 2001; Milner, 2008a; Reardon & Yun, 2001; Noguera, 1996; Weiner, 2003).

This dual process of in-migration by Blacks, immigrants and other minorities coupled with the out-migration of affluent Whites to suburban areas continue to transform the American landscape and impact schools located in these spaces. A consideration of the larger contextual factors that shape the urban landscape indicates the geographical space and ethnic make-up of urban area neighborhoods and schools in the
U.S. is not a mishap. Rather it is a result of institutional features of the educational system, as well as a residential and educational choice made by families (Ledwith & Clark, 2007). The formation of urban space and place has created such a solid structure, that segregated communities are isolated geographically, economically, socially and culturally. According to Levine and Zipp (1993), schools represent a small blueprint of the larger institutional activities occurring in the surrounding geographical areas. A continual analysis of the urban landscape, inclusive of education, without an examination of the larger contextual factors that shape these spaces and places (i.e. politics, economics, societal issues) will result in a continuation of the deficit paradigm (Milner 2008a) and educational theory and practices that blame students, urban culture and family ills as the reason for poor academic achievement (Wiener, 2003). The next section further disrupts the one dimensional deficit paradigm by explicating external factors that assist in shaping urban space and place.

**Partitioning of Race and Space**

After the decision of Brown, substantial efforts were made to desegregate schools by outlawing *de jure* forms of segregation based solely on race. The 1960 Kerner Commission on Civil Disorders Report (1968) pointed out that our nation was developing into two societies, one Black and the other White - separate and unequal. The Report highlighted that Whites were moving to suburban areas for reasons associated with rising mobility and affluence of middle-class families. More recent research concerning white flight patterns has uncovered a number of reasons why White families flee from urban to suburban area neighborhoods which include avoiding contact with minorities (Fairlie &
Resch, 2002), searching for racially homogeneity and/or religious affiliations (Saporito, Yancey, & Louis, 2001), pursing a quality education for their children (Chubb & Moe, 1990) and a final emerging trend indicates that when neighborhood schools fail to meet parental expectations (i.e. discipline, academic excellence) White families migrate towards suburban schools (Zhang, 2008). Additional research on neighborhood choice patterns indicate that Blacks and Whites have differing migration patterns. For instance, while White families make concerted efforts to reside in predominately White neighborhoods, non-White families exhibit a greater tolerance for integrated neighborhoods (Ledwith & Clark, 2007). According to Ledwith and Clark (2007), even when Whites have limited economic resources they exhibit consistent patterns of avoiding residential neighborhoods with a high concentration of minorities and are less likely to move away from predominantly White tract housing to racially mixed tracts. Moreover, when Blacks have sufficient economic resources, they opt to live in racially mixed neighborhoods with the exception of neighborhoods that are overwhelmingly White (Ledwith & Clark, 2007).

This body of research illustrates clear patterns of in- and out-migration patterns made by families, through neighborhood choice; however, these efforts are also supported and re-enforced through the law. For instance, desegregation efforts were implemented through cross-district bussing policies (Clotfelter, 2001) in the 1971 Supreme Court case of *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*. This case dealt with busing public school students to mitigate racially imbalanced schools. In a sharp turn of events, the 1974 Supreme Court decision in the *Milliken v. Bradley* case of
residential segregation made certain that public school segregation in American urban spaces while relieving suburban school districts from assisting in the desegregation of inner-city school systems (Clotfelter, 2001). This decision essentially reinforced the existing trend of White flight (Ledwith & Clark, 2007) and continued to shape the spatial distribution of urban neighborhoods and schools.

**Urban Education and the Urban Context**

According to Gottdiener (1985), an agreed upon definition of urban has plagued researchers over the years and in a similar manner, defining urban education continues to be challenging. Understanding the true nature of urbanization and urban education involves a multifaceted approach, inclusive of political, economic and societal variables that create structural and institutional barriers for students attending urban schools. In fact, several researchers have attempted to define urban education with an intention to capture both the geographical as well as the societal factors that shape urban spaces and places. Rothstein (1996) defined urban education as schools geographically situated within urban areas which function to serve the needs of industrial/business driven, commercial society.

Involved in maintaining the social relations of schools and providing the labor market with replacement workers…In all these state schools, there is a similar organizational ethos and structure: bureaucratic and hierarchical lines of communication facilitate the reproductive functions of schooling in mass society (p. 161).

Obiakor and Beachum (2005) extends this definition and suggests that urban schools are typically situated in urban environments, which mirror the larger, hierarchical and bureaucratic society, and are convoluted by issues of race and class. In addition,
Noguera (2004) adds that urban schools are more likely to be populated racially by students of color. Although there are many facets to understanding and defining urban education one of the more underlying lynchpins is its specific geographical location. For instance, the U.S. Census Bureau (2009) classifies all urban territory as

All territory, population and housing units located within an urbanized area (UA) or an urban cluster (UC). It delineates UA and UC boundaries to encompass densely settle territory, which consist of core census blocks that have a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile and surrounding census blocks that have an overall density of at least 500 people per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

A comparison of definitions indicate that Obiakor and Beachum (2005) factor in the larger societal forces impinging and shaping urban areas, while the U.S. Census Bureau (2009) characterizes urban territory in relation to geographical location and dense populations. Together these definitions illustrate that urban areas, are characteristic of a concentration of ethnically/ racially diverse people who are situated in a geographically isolated and segregated locale. It has been demonstrated that law, public policy and neighborhood choice continually shape urban landscape and provides the impetus for understanding urban education in a contextual manner. Furthermore, the Civil Rights movement, white flight, desegregation and the economic decline of many industrial cities are all contributory factors to the plight of urban education (Obiakor & Beachum, 2005).

In his article, Confronting the Urban in Urban School Reform, Pedro Noguera (1996) examined the social context of urban schools and determined that in most conversations about violence, drugs or teen pregnancy the relationship between the communities and schools serve to shape the discourse; however, when the focus shifts to educational issues, the relationships between context and educational goals seem to
somehow vanish. As noted by Noguera (1996), policy makers are not willing to confront environmental aspects in relation to educational difficulties facing urban schools. In fact, in the 1970s politicians and policymakers agreed that residence in economically depressed inner-cities were responsible for the deterioration of the social condition (Pinkney, as cited in Noguera, 1996).

A review of the literature reveals very little has been done in the way of examining a full range of contextual factors that influence urban schools in teacher education (Wiener, 2003). As long as research concerning urban education is void of understanding a more comprehensive picture of urban schools (e.g. urbanization/urban geography) it will continue to paint a nihilistic picture and enforce the deficit notion of urban education. The extant literature review indicates that urban education has been a subject of conceptual and empirical research for approximately four decades (Kozol, 2006; Milner, 2008a; Noguera, 1996; Tyack, 1974; Weiner, 2003), with the more recent literature disrupting deficit notions of K-12 urban education (Lynn & Parker, 2006; Milner, 2008a; Morris, 2004; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005; Weiner, 2003). This body of research examines the social context and how it impacts student performance at the secondary level; however, missing from this literature are the effects of achievement at the postsecondary level, due to separate educational trajectories at the secondary level. More often, the dialogue concerning achievement at the postsecondary level is couched in terms of educational attainment, student engagement and persistence.

According to Smrekar and Goldring (2009), meaningful assessments on the impact of schooling on student outcomes should also consider later effects in life.
Studies that look at short term effects of desegregation (i.e. achievement) compromise the impact of school desegregation, while studies that examine the long term effects considers the workforce transition that focus on what happens to students as they move into adulthood as a result of their intergroup experiences in elementary and secondary schools (Smrekar & Goldring, 2009). One of the few studies examining the educational experiences of Blacks as they move into adulthood, and examines the geographical locate of Blacks is the work of Jacqueline Fleming (1984).

Fleming (1984) looked at Blacks in college at a time when many thought college environments could not be studied with the usual empirical methods available to social scientists. Proving this assumption wrong, Fleming (1984) conducted a study comparing freshmen and seniors in approximately fifteen postsecondary institutions in the Urban South (Georgia), Southwest (Texas), Deep South (Mississippi) and North (Ohio). In her comparative study, she noted male and female variations in the academic and social adjustment of Black students who attend HBCUs and PWIs, arguing that Black females fare better at PWIs than Black males, while Black males have more social control and authority at HBCUs. Related to geographical location, Fleming (1984) wrote “it appears that in the Deep South there are special problems at work that prevent the adequate development of black intellectual capacities in either setting” (p. xiv). Although Fleming (1984) considers gender and racial differences, and geographical location separately, she does not consider the overlapping effects of geographical locations or institutional type. Specifically, Fleming’s (1984) study was concerned with student outcomes rather than only with institutional characteristics.
A review of the historical and contemporary literature of African American education and urban education indicates that the experiences of Black students in primary, secondary and postsecondary institutions have been shaped by a number of factors which includes a (1) history of inclusion or exclusion of different racial and ethnic groups (Taylor & Olswang, 1997), (2) structural diversity in terms of numeric representations of different racial groups, (3) the psychological climate which is inclusive of student perceptions and attitudes among groups members, and (4) behavioral dimensions typified by relationships among groups within the campus community. Given the impact that social and academic experiences have on African Americans their experiences warrant important consideration and exploration. The added component of geographical location would add to the research literature and speak to multiple audiences from Geography to Social Science researchers. Although literature related to geographical place is newly emerging in the discipline of Geography as environmental racism (Pulido, 2000), this line of work is burgeoning in K-12 urban schools, in an effort to reconstruct the urban school image (Rury, 2005; Wiggan, 2007; Buendía, Ares, Juarez, & Peercy, 2004) and disrupt deficit paradigms.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

According to the Urban Scholars personal profile form (See Appendix A), this form requires information from urban youth across the state of Ohio and the nation related to academic majors, honors and awards, related school conferences attendance, involvement in school and extracurricular and community activities. The Urban Scholars Scholarship program is different from the Imre and Carolyn Balogh Education Scholarship, offered through the Patton College of Education and Human Services in that it targets females enrolled in the Early Childhood Education program who are from Cuyahoga County (Ohio) (i.e. Geauga, Medina, Lake, Portage or Lorain). Although both of these scholarship programs recruit students from a specific geographical location, the Urban Scholars Program is open to both male and females from a broader range of academic majors and programs of study (Ohio University, 2010b). Regardless of the target audience of various scholarship programs, a critical first step in understanding and assigning meaning to the co-curricular achievement of students is to make an argument of why qualitative methodology is the best approach from which to conduct this research and answer the research questions.

The overall significance of any study cannot be fully recognized until the research methodology is understood. Understanding the research methodology is critical in qualitative research, where the research methodologies for data gathering, analyzing and coding are often unique to the phenomenon being investigated. The purpose of this section is to outline and describe the proposed qualitative methodology, research design, theoretical framework, sampling procedure and the methods of data collection and
analysis. This section concludes by discussing the self as researcher in an attempt to make the researchers position visible throughout the current research study.

This study examined the educational processes of successful urban Black scholarship recipients of the Urban Scholars Scholarship Program, who attended a rural PWI. It is critical to note the research participants are successful as well as urban as outlined by traditional standardized measures. The aim of the study was to determine how Urban Scholars (U.S.) maintained their success as part of their story, even though they were faced with structural and institutional barriers that worked to impede their success.

**Qualitative Methodology**

Over the last thirty years, qualitative research has emerged to rival quantitative research as a viable methodological approach in areas of social science and education (O’Donoghue, 2007). According to Glesne (2006), the chosen research methods speak volumes about a researchers view on what qualifies as valuable knowledge. While quantitative research methods are designed to make generalizations about social phenomena, make calculated guesses about these phenomena and give clarification, qualitative research methodology seeks to understand phenomena from the perspective of research participant while contextualizing the socio-cultural-political milieu (Glesne, 2006).

Since quantitative and qualitative methodologies vary in nature, they also have various processes and approaches to answering the central research question. Quantitative approaches begin with a theory and hypothesis, calls for the researcher to be
objective and removed from the research participants, with data being reduced to numerical indices and quantifiable pieces of information (Patton, 2002). On the other hand, qualitative research methodology seeks to understand and interpret how research’ participants in various social setting constructs their experiences in the world (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002). This inquiry and ontological position lends itself to the reality that is socially constructed, relative to a specific context germane to research participants. For instance, since public schools are held accountable to state and federal mandates, social science researchers may disagree that qualitative research is the best way to determine what works (Holliday, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). According to Holliday (2002), an on-going debate has ensued over whether qualitative research is sufficient in examining educational issues of curriculum, achievement and pedagogy. More recently, Rubin and Rubin, (2005) suggest that researchers in Sociology, Political Science, Public Administration, Education and Health have discovered the importance of qualitative methodologies when studying a complex and nuanced world.

A subsequent reason to utilize qualitative research methodologies is due to its emphasis on processes and meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). Furthermore, qualitative research methodologies do not seek to examine or measure in terms of quantity, frequency or amount. Rather it examines the social construction of the reality, the personal involvement of the researcher and the situational/contextual constraints that shape the inquiry (Glesne, 2006). Also, methodology seeks to unearth patterns of relationships among research participants within the selected community, while seeking
to understand the relational patterns of students and their involvement within the phenomenon being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Glesne, 2006). Creswell (2007) extends the characterization of qualitative research methodology by noting the importance of examining the processes of social phenomenon. For example, while quantitative measures are succinct, systematic, standardized and presented in short spaces, qualitative findings are longer, more detailed and vary in content (Patton, 2002).

To obtain depth and breadth of the co-curricular experiences of successful urban Black students and illustrate the educational processes of students, qualitative methodologies are the most appropriate measures to explicate the phenomena in question. In the current study, the utility of qualitative research methodologies assigns value to the voices of research participants - that is successful urban African American students attending OU. Without the usage of qualitative methodologies, including data collection, qualitative interviewing, the stories, analysis and interpretations, the phenomena becomes difficult to assess. Consequently, qualitative research methodologies were noted as the best choice for answering the central research questions and for explicating the lived experiences of participants from their perspective. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do Urban Scholars, at Ohio University, perceive or understand their own co-curricular achievement as it relates to their college matriculation?
2. What role does race, class, culture, and gender play in their conception of achievement? and
3. What were the experiences of former Urban Scholars?
Again, these research questions examined the schooling processes of successful urban African American students and determined the role that race, class, culture and gender played in their perception of achievement. Moreover, these questions were explicated through the framework of a qualitative research design through a case study. Through the theoretical framework of CRT, an intersectionality of factors was examined, through counterstories and power dynamics.

**A Phenomenological Case Study: The Research Design**

Social science disciplines such as education and counseling value research as a means of understanding, informing and improving theory and practice (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In essence, a research design comprises a step-wise sequence of events that joins empirical data to the central research question and finally to the conclusive findings of the research study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002). For instance, in qualitative research methodologies, data analysis is carried out in an inductive fashion, followed by explicating the emerging patterns/themes that resonate from the data. Next, the written report includes the voices of participant through their narratives, researcher reflexivity and a multifaceted account and analysis of the phenomena. Finally, the information extends the literature and signals for a call of action (Patton, 2002). These sequential events can be carried out using a phenomenological case study to investigate the central research questions: (1) How do Urban Scholars, at Ohio University, perceive or understand their own co-curricular achievement as it relates to their college matriculation? (2) What role does race, culture and gender play in their conception of achievement and (3) What were the experiences of former Urban Scholars.
Although there are various approaches to understanding phenomenology, they all “focus on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). In a phenomenological case study, the lived experiences of individuals are described while the research subsequently describes the commonalities among research participants from their perspective (Creswell, 2007). The objective of phenomenology is to reduce the phenomena of individual experiences to an explanation with a universal understanding (Moustakas, 1994). Hence, the foundational question underlying phenomenological research is “what is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of the phenomenon for this person or group of people” (Patton, 2002, p. 104)? Once the inquiry is established, Creswell (2007) and Glesne (2006) suggest the role of the researcher is to describe commonalities and present the data in a universally understood manner. As noted by Kupers (2009), phenomenology considers novel ways of thinking and reasoning. Furthermore, Kupers (2009) posits that phenomenology is “A great diversity in various points of view of thinkers and approaches… marked by a variety of different forms, themes, ideas, problems, and issues and further developments and variations” (p. 52).

Although there were within group variations in the current study, a phenomenological case study approach, in a bound context, was the methodology of choice since the Urban Scholars Scholarship recipients had a common thread connecting and uniting them (i.e. institutional type, scholarship program, urban students, rural
context). Through qualitative means, this study sought to understand and develop a composite depiction of the educational processes of urban youth who attend or attended a rural PWI. Since qualitative methodologies allow for a depth and breathe of understanding various features of a phenomenon, it is critical that we understand these common and unique experiences in order to expand sound educational practices and policies.

Furthermore, this research design allowed meaning to emerge, while socially constructing and interpreting the co-curricular experiences of Urban Scholars. As students conveyed their co-curricular experiences, the interpretations came from their past, their personalities and their performance both in- and out- side of the classroom. Through the intersectionality of these combined variables, meaning was constructed. Hence, phenomenology, combined with the bounded context of a case study is the best research design to answer the central research questions.

Case Study

According to Berg (2009), although researchers define case study in different ways, its utility can be used to examine simple and multifaceted phenomena. A qualitative case study is distinguishable from other approaches, according to Patton (2002), since it focuses on participant insight, from their perspectives. By focusing on discovery, this approach lends itself to contributing to the knowledge base of understanding the educational experiences of Blacks attending rural PWIs and providing insight into current educational practices that support and create barriers for these students. According to Wiggan (2007), these contributions are critical since most studies
addressing urban African American students have been quantitative in nature. In an
effort to deviate from descriptive data, Sedlacek (1987) introduced the utility of
noncognitive variables as a way to understand and conceptualize the schooling processes
of Black on White campuses. Although much of the evaluative work looking at
recruitment and persistence of minorities had been descriptive during this time, Sedlacek
(1999) argued the old frame did not capture change, neither did it lend itself to an
analysis of the current trends taking place.

Stake (1995) further dissects the terms and intent of a case study analysis by
distinguishing between the types of case studies: (1) an intrinsic case study allows for an
improved understanding of a case; (2) a single instrumental case study allow researchers
to target issues and then choose a bounded case to further demonstrate the phenomena;
and finally, a (3) collective case study, also known as a multiple case study, allows the
researcher to select multiple case studies to represent the issue.

As noted by Stake (1995), there are several procedures available to qualitative
researchers conducting a case study. First, the researcher must determine the
appropriateness of a case study. Next, researchers must identify the case and whether it
involves a person or multiple individuals, a program, an event or various activities.
Third, the researcher must understand the data collection process is extensive and
requires the use of multiple data sources (e.g. physical artifacts, archival records, direct
and participant observations, documents, interviews). Finally, during the interpretive
phase, the researcher reposts the significance of the case, characterized by Lincoln and
Guba (1985) as lessons learned.
Case study has been identified from other qualitative research designs based upon what Cronbach (1975) describes as interpretation in context. For instance, Patton (2002) suggests qualitative analysis is grounded in a “thick, rich description” (p. 437) that places the reader in the “setting being described” (p. 437). Through qualitative research methodology and the thick, rich description, readers are afforded the opportunity to understand the phenomena and make interpretations about the meaning and critical nature of the phenomena under investigation (Patton, 2002). As such, descriptions, which encompasses details, context, emotions, voices and meaning, are the bedrock of qualitative research reporting, which assists in flushing out the depth and aspects of the case.

The current research study is bound to the natural context, in that the researcher does not maneuver, manipulate or control the phenomenon of interest, leaving the phenomenon of interest to unfold without a predetermined course of act, unlike what would occur in a laboratory or other controlled setting (Patton, 2002). In the current study, the researcher explored a single case or phenomenon which was bounded by geographical location/ place (i.e. rural university), case (i.e. Urban Scholars) and context (i.e. predominantly White institution) and collected detailed information through a variety of data sources such as, semi-structured interviews, document analysis and member checks.

Denzin and Lincoln (2002) outline several advantages of case study reporting for naturalistic inquiry which are relevant to the following research:
• This case study is the primary vehicle for obtaining the *emic* (insider) perspective, where the researcher will work towards a re-construction of the research participants constructions (*emic*);

• This case study will present a holistic and lifelike rich-thick description rather than providing a mere symbolic abstraction of experiences;

• This case study serves as an effective vehicle for demonstrating the relationship between the research participants and the research. Both data collection and analysis on one hand, and interpretation and reporting on the other are all influenced by this interplay; and finally

• This case study will provide a grounded assessment of context. As phenomena derive their meaning from their existent context, it is critical that the audience understand the entire context.

The current study sought to understand the lived experience of successful Urban Scholars through a phenomenological case study. The intent was to build on participant insights from an *emic* (insider) perspective and embrace an interpretive framework, as a vehicle to unearth the multiple dimensions of the co-curricular experiences of successful Urban Scholars. Through the lens of CRT, the researcher was further able to investigate individual and institutional educational practices that assisted in understanding the co-curricular experiences of high achieving Urban Scholars.

According to Parker (1998), this theoretical framework borrowed from political, social and philosophical critiques that purposefully confronted the objectivity of Critical Legal Studies (CLS). As such, researchers have sought to apply the framework to better understand the social construction of race and how it operates in institutions of education (i.e. secondary, postsecondary) (Bernal, 2002; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Gillborn, 2005; Iverson, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Milner, 2008b; Parker, 1998; Parker et al., 1999;
Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

Researchers in the various fields, including Education, have increasingly begun to utilize Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a tool to understand the qualitative experiences of individuals.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has acquired increasing attention from different circles and disciplines as a viable research tool. Not only has this framework borrowed from the critiques of different disciplines that challenge the objective reality of the law and of legal doctrine and interpretation (Parker, 1998), but educational scholars have begun to explore the utility of CRT to understand how the social construction of race and subsequent operation of racism play out in educational institutions, at both the secondary and postsecondary levels (Bernal, 2002; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Gillborn, 2005; Iverson, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Milner, 2008b; Parker, 1998; Parker et al., 1999; Patton et al., 2007; Solórzano et al., 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Taylor, 2000; Tate, 1997; Yosso et al., 2004; Yosso, 2005).

Although the framework continued to expand with Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) applying tenants of CRT to educational research (Bernal, 2002; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso et al., 2004), Parker and Lynn (2004) posited that educational researchers should continue developing and broadening the utility of the framework in order to understand the educational experiences of racially diverse students...
and communities of color. In support of expanding the utility of CRT, DeCuir and Dixon (2004) stated that researchers were not utilizing the framework to its fullest extent. Over the years and since its introduction into the field of education, CRT has continued to develop as a framework that calls attention to the dominant notions of racism in education (Solórzano et al., 2001). In its development, this framework has dismantled and challenged a “color-blind, race-neutral meritocracy” (Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004, p. 2). In the current study, the utility of CRT seeks to understand the significance of race, the social construction of race and how this construction acts as a barrier for students of color in the contextual confines of a rural PWI.

Beginning in the mid 1970s, due to the lack of progress of the field of CLS, scholars within the field began challenging the pace at which this field interrogated race and racism through U.S. jurisprudence (Delgado, 1995). In concert with Delgado, the late Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman spearheaded efforts to forge this movement by criticizing the manner in which the law privileged some and ignored others (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). According to Lynn and Parker (2006), the architects of CRT made several distinctions that shaped their argument while providing a robust conceptual framework that addressed the tenants of CRT. First, while CRT recognizes that racism is part of the cultural milieu in the U.S. (Bell, 1992, 1995b; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), it honors the telling of stories and counterstories (Delgado, 1995). In Bell’s (1995b) article, Racial Realism, he contends, “the racial realism that we must seek is simply a hard-eyed view of racism as it is” (p. 308). Next, CRT considers Whiteness as property by using the work of Cheryl Harris (1995), who examined how Whiteness evolved into a
property interest for those who were able to bring themselves under this definition.

Interest convergence, a forth tenant of CRT, is noted for the belief that “racial equality and equity for people of color will be pursued and advanced when they converge with the interests, needs, expectations, and ideology of Whites (Milner, 2008b, p. 333). A final tenant put forth by the architects of CRT, involves a close examination in the ability of the law to create conditions for a just and equitable society (Crenshaw, 1988). As noted by Delgado and Stefancic (2001), “critical race scholars are discontent with liberalism as a framework for addressing American’s racial problems” (p. 21). In the current research study, relevant tenants of CRT related to the educational phenomenon are explicated and include - counterstorytelling, interest convergence and Whiteness as property. What follows is the utility of CRT in the following study.

Counterstorytelling

A central tenant of CRT requires “recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color” (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993, p. 6) through counterstorytelling. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) define counterstorytelling as “writing that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially those held by the majority” (p. 144). Dissimilar to counterstories are the traditional social science theoretical models which often explain educational inequalities through what Solórzano and Yosso (2002) refer to as majoritarian stories - also known as monovocals, master narratives and standard stories. Through stories and counterstories told by African American students, the centrality of experiential knowledge serves to challenge mainstream assumptions and discourse (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Dixon & Rousseau,
As noted by Solórzano and Yosso (2002), counterstories should not be utilized as a direct reaction of majoritarian stories, but as “recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color” (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993, p. 6) through counterstorytelling. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) define counterstorytelling as “writing that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially those held by the majority” (p. 144). Although everyone will not accept stories and counterstories as valid forms of knowledge, educational researchers posit that accepting storytelling as a valid form of knowledge is essentially an argument over subjectivity versus objectivity (Bernal, 2002). Furthermore, Scheurich and Young (1997) refer to this as epistemological racism or racially biased ways of knowing. One of the biggest arguments against the use of stories comes from Farber and Sherry (1997) who critique Patricia Williams’ (1991) well-known Benetton story. Farber and Sherry (1997) argue that stories like Williams’ (1991) provide no clear analytic framework, which makes it difficult for stories to contribute to public debate. In stark contrast, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) differentiate CRT storytelling from fiction by describing the relationship between CRT and qualitative inquiry.

We are not developing imaginary characters that engage in fictional scenarios. Instead, the “composite” characters we develop are grounded in real-life experiences and actual empirical data and are contextualized in social situations that are also grounded in real life, not fiction (p. 36).

Denzin and Lincoln (2002) characterize qualitative research methodology as an interpretive and naturalistic view of the world, where researchers interpret and make meaning of phenomena based on participant perceptions. For purposes of this study, the use of this definition highlights the critical use of storytelling for Black students who live
in a society where race is socially constructed. Scholars like Parker and Lynn (2002) describe how the utility of CRT has moved the usage of narratives, stories and counterstories forward while seeking to “expose the historical, ideological, psychological, and social contexts in which racism has been declared virtually eradicated” (p. 10). Additional CRT scholars, like Bell (1992), Solórzano & Yosso (2002) and Williams (1991), ascribe the utility of narratives, stories and counterstories as central in understanding the lived experiences of those impacted by racism as well as documenting implicit and explicit forms of institutional racism.

A review of the literature indicates stories and counterstories relative to the Black experience in higher education (1) juxtaposes mainstream research and offers depth and breadth into overlooked realities (Kimbrough, Molock & Walton, 1996), (2) it allows voices on the borderlands (Bernal, 2002) to be heard while affording outsiders greater insight, (3) challenges the belief that education in the U.S. is a fair process that is not biased and based on meritocracy (Yosso et al., 2004), (4) exposes individual-level microaggressions (subtle degradations and putdowns that appear harmless but have cumulative effects and are often debilitating) (Pierce, 1995) and macro-level forms of institutional racism (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano et al., 2001), (5) shatters the complacent discourse on race (Hurtado, 1992) and (6) furthers the struggle for institutional reform on predominantly White campuses (Iverson, 2007).

Throughout the six aforementioned ways that counterstories are used in qualitative research, the theme of “voice” is central. In this manner, Calmore (1995) posits that CRT moves readers in the direction of “personal expression that allows our
experiences and lessons, learned as people of color, to convey the knowledge we possess in a way that is empowering…” (p. 321). To build on these expressions, critical race theorists urge scholars to shift perspectives and look to the bottom of the well (Bell, 1992) to begin enriching their understanding concerning the knowledge that people of color hold (Bell, 1992; Hurtado, 1992; Solórzano et al., 2001; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Yosso et al., 2004).

**Interest Convergence**

As noted earlier, the concept of interest convergence is a central tenant of CRT and according to Milner (2008b) people of color experience the converging of interest based on larger advances made by Whites. In an initial attempt to illustrate this concept, Bell (1980) examines the decision of Brown and asserts that gains for Blacks have always been in conjunction with the sociopolitical and economic climate issues that favor Whites. Specifically Bell (1980) argues policy makers, at the time of Brown, were inspired by self-interest as opposed to a genuine concern for racial equality in efforts to demonstrate to European countries that Blacks were provided legal constitutional rights as well as access to the nation’s public schools (Bell, 1995a; Bell, 1995b). Although Bell (1980) used Brown to illustrate interest convergence at the primary and secondary levels, the same principles are applicable at the postsecondary level specifically related to institutional diversity initiatives.

According to Iverson (2007), members in executive level cabinet positions pull together Diversity Councils to examine concerns of diversity (i.e. climate, student and faculty persistence and attrition) and continue with recommendations that officially
impact policy of future diversity and inclusion initiatives. What may be camouflaged in institutional diversity initiatives, according to Iverson (2007), is the rhetoric behind the marketplace discourse. In this discourse of the collegiate marketplace, Iverson (2007) notes that institutions market diversity to maintain a competitive edge by using rhetorical phrases like “commitment to diversity (p. 599),” “increasingly global marketplace (p. 599),” and increasing educational opportunity. Yosso et al. (2004) suggests that at historically White institutions, this language reflects the majoritarian story, which articulates these benefits in relation to Whites and imply that admission of students of color serve to solely benefit their White counterparts so Whites can become “more racially tolerant, liven up class dialogue, and prepare White students for getting a job in the multicultural, global economy” (p. 8). These marketplace discourses produce [visible] students of color as a commodity that adds value to the university’s profile. Through marketing strategies, brochures and recruitment initiatives, successfully recruited students of color gain an exchange and economic value. According to Iverson (2007), this exchange value is most evident in linkages to institutional diversity action plans and subsequent financial gains - which are similar to expenditures of federal and state dollars for K-12 students enrolled in special education curriculums. Also the exchange value is evident in the university’s reputation and standing in the marketplace which ties into Harris’s (1995) characteristic of property and Whiteness.

**Whiteness as Property**

Legal CRT scholar, Cheryl Harris (1995) begins her premises of Whiteness as property by insinuating the genesis of property rights in the U.S. were grounded in terms
of race. From its inception, Whiteness characterized the legal status of a person, yielded tangible and economic benefits, and was held in high regard. Although property is often related to tangible objects (e.g. land, home, cars), Harris (1995) traces the origins of Whiteness as property to a system that dominated Blacks and objectified their Black bodies as property (e.g. slaves). Following the period of chattel slavery, Whiteness became the basis for racialized privileges - a type of status where White racial identity provided the basis for distributing societal benefits (Harris, 1995). Through the law, these arrangements were ratified as a legitimate type of property and according to Harris (1995), the rank and condition of being labeled as White was considered a valuable asset, due to a host of privileges and benefits that accompanied this status. Moreover, Whites have come to expect and rely on the associated benefits of Whiteness, which according to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) is represented in this society as the absence of the pollutant effects of Blackness. Although Harris (1995) outlines several characteristics of property and Whiteness, for purposes of this research, the historical significance of property related to educational inequality is explored - that is the absolute right to exclude.

In formal education, exclusion was evidenced by denying African Americans full access to schooling (Anderson, 1988). Later, the right to exclude was demonstrated by the establishment of separate schools (Anderson, 1978; Anderson, 1988; Butchart, 1988) and more contemporary forms of exclusion are displayed through neighborhood choice and White flight, school choice and vouchers and curriculum tracking (Clotfelter, 2001; Green, 1999; Ledwith & Clark, 2007; Massey & Denton, 1993). In this manner, the right
to exclude has a two-fold purpose. First, it signifies an inherent unifying characteristic, which grants those categorized as White the ability to exclude others from enjoying the benefits associated with this status and it excludes others - notably non-Whites.

In 1995, Ladson-Billings and Tate explicated the relationship between Whiteness as property and school inequality and concluded that gaining full access to a curriculum that is rigorous has by in large been restricted to enjoyment by White students. Due to the formal smokescreen selection processes (e.g. standardized tests) required to access this type curriculum, students of color attending secondary schools are restricted to a high quality curriculum, and certainly restricted from a rigorous curriculum that aims to prepare them for postsecondary education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Seemingly, district mandates, policies and practices operate in a dualistic fashion. While these practices restrict students of color from gaining access to high quality curricula, they also reify the importance of Whiteness as property, whereby those who align closely with the definition of Whiteness enjoy the possession, use and enjoyment of a liberal curriculum (e.g. advance placement, gifted and talented) (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

The utility of CRT as a theoretical framework in the current study acknowledges race is socially constructed and critiques systems that advance and perpetuate majoritarian interests. Borrowing from Delgado (1989), tenants of CRT serve important roles in understanding the educational experiences of racially marginalized students who attend predominantly White campuses.
Purposive Sampling Strategy and Site Selection

It is important to examine the strategies for acquiring participants to the study, as well as explicating why the site of the study or context was chosen. This section begins with a brief description of purposeful sampling, followed by a description of the research participants, criteria for informant selection and gaining entrée. Finally a depiction of the site or setting will be provided. Patton (2002) suggests that nothing captures the stark differences between quantitative and qualitative research more than the dissimilar rationales that support each sampling approach. In qualitative inquiry the depth of a small sample can be obtained even in a single case study (n=1), whereas quantitative methodologies depend on larger samples selected randomly (Patton, 2002).

Participants

Research participants were selected based upon purposeful sampling and participated in semi-structured/ open-ended, in-depth interviews. The researcher gained access to participants through the Office for Multicultural Student Access and Retention (OMSAR) to obtain a complete list of current and former Urban Scholars. According to information provided by OMSAR, and at the time of the research study, there were twenty-one graduates from the Urban Scholars Scholarship program, with the inaugural graduation taking place in June 2009. At the time of interviews, there were twenty-eight Urban Scholars enrolled at the university and currently on scholarship. Seven of twenty-eight (25%) were not on scholarship during the 2011 fall and winter quarters, due to not meeting scholarship requirements (i.e. credit hours, low GPAs, enrollment, persistence). Of the total current and former Urban Scholar Scholarship recipients (n=55), ten students
(or 8%) participated in the current research study. Seven females and three males participated in the current study and according to classification, 1 sophomore was interviewed, 3 juniors, 3 seniors and 3 OU alumni, who were part of the inaugural class of Urban Scholars.

Selected participants previously attended and graduated from urban high schools in the state of Ohio and demonstrated financial need with an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of $8,000 or less as determined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Furthermore, participants are considered high achieving, as adopted from OUs selection criteria, which includes students who are academically talented as indicated by standardized tests scores, grade point average and class rank (Ohio University, 2010a). Specific classifications (i.e. sophomores, juniors, seniors) were selected since students successfully completed their first year at the university and were considered in good standing academically with the university, without being placed on academic or disciplinary probation, which could have affected participation in the research study as well as academic and social activities. Furthermore, by the end of the third quarter, or the first full year, participants have a better understanding of what their college experiences entail and are able to describe these educational processes that occur in and outside the classroom. Although there are no regulations for sample sizes in qualitative research, Patton (2002) suggests that sample size is dependent upon the purpose of the inquiry, the usefulness of data, credibility and what is done with the available time and resources.
Criteria for Informant Selection

Selection criteria was based upon traditional student rank as an active Urban Scholar, (sophomores, juniors and seniors) who had been enrolled at OU for a minimum of 3 consecutive quarters. For purposes of this study, traditional students are those who matriculated to college immediately after completing high school and who are between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four.

Gaining Entrée

From prior interactions with the Urban Scholars, as a graduate student attending OU, a commission member for African American Affairs and a graduate assistant with the Office for Diversity, Access and Equity, the researcher utilized the experiences from these positions and relationships to recruit participants through face-to-face conversations and by explaining the purpose of the study. A complete list of Urban Scholars was obtained through OMSAR. Urban Scholars were contacted via e-mail and by face-to-face interactions. They were provided with a lay summary of the study, which aimed to explain the rationale behind the study, the usage of data sources and the fact that their participation was completely voluntary (See Appendix B).

Setting

Ohio University (OU) is a public federally funded research institution located in Athens, Ohio. It is the largest city in the county seat of Athens County, Ohio, and it is the oldest university in the Northwest Territory, located along the Hocking River in the southeastern part of Ohio (Hollow, 2003). Despite being located in a rural [fringe] area, the University prides itself on having a Carnegie classification of high research activity
According to OUs Office in Institutional Research (2010), only 103 schools (2.3%) of 4,391 schools assessed by the Carnegie Foundation are classified as a research university (high research activity).

The 2010 OU Fact Book reported a fall, 2009, enrollment of 17,245 undergraduate students on the main campus and 9,712 undergraduate students on the regional campuses (Chillicothe Campus, Eastern Campus, Lancaster Campus, Pickerington Center, Southern Campus, Proctorville Center and Zanesville Campus) for a total enrollment of 26,957 undergraduate students (Office of Institutional Research, 2010). Fall, 2009 enrollment data show that 17,520 (83%) of students enrolled at the Athens campus were Ohio residents, with the greatest number of students coming from Cuyahoga County, the most populous county in Ohio (Office of Institutional Research, 2010). The majority of students enrolled consisted of full time, undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 24. In addition comparative enrollment data indicates that OU is lagging when compared to its peer institutions with 5% of the student population identifying as African American (See table 3) (Office of Institutional Research, 2010).

According to the Office of Institutional Research (2010), the overall student population at OU has slightly more women (51.8%) than men (48.2%) seeking degrees, with a great disparity among Black enrollment, compared to other racial/ethnic minorities. Although Blacks represent a small percentage of the total enrollment at OU, and successful Urban Scholars reflect an even smaller number, this research aims to inform similar institutional types about the educational processes of urban Black youth who attend PWIs. Hence, OU was selected as a place for the current study based upon its
region, public versus private status, racial and ethnic composition, as well as what Rubin and Rubin (2005) term feasibility - ensuring that the research can be completed given the time and resources available and the researcher can find research participants who are knowledgeable on the topic and are willing to participate in the study.

Glesne (2006) suggests that for many studies reciprocity is assumed to be a matter of monetary rewards in exchange for the research participants time; however, in qualitative inquiry, Creswell (2007) suggests that issues of reciprocity are more difficult due to the time involved and the nature of the relationships developed (Glesne, 2006). In the current study, participation were not monetarily compensated. Rather, they were provided with an OU memento with a value of less than $5.00. Furthermore, Glesne (2006) suggests that the interviewing process provides an occasion for reciprocity by providing participants with an opportunity to voice their perceptions, which assists them in understanding aspects of their own social identity.
Table 3. Comparative Peer Institution Enrollment Data by Race/ Ethnicity (Fall 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Percent African American</th>
<th>Percent Hispanic/ Latino</th>
<th>Percent Asian American</th>
<th>Percent Native American</th>
<th>Percent Caucasian</th>
<th>Percent International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ohio University Athens, OH</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auburn University, Auburn, AL</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clemson University, Clemson, SC</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana University Bloomington, IN</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Delaware Newark, DE</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Missouri Columbia, MO</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, NC</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington State University Pullman, WA</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ohio University Office of Institutional Research (2010)

Data Collection Methods

Dissimilar to survey, experimental or historical research, case study does not lay claim to one particular method of data collection or analysis (Patton, 2002). In case
study, a variety of methods for gathering data range from testing to interviewing, with some techniques being utilized more than others (Patton, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Although in a qualitative case study, researchers rely heavily on data obtained from interviews, observation and documents (Patton, 2002), the utility of multiple data collection methods is known as triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). For the current research study, the methodological triangulation for this research project combines dissimilar methods of interviews, document analysis and member checks to study the same bound case. Moreover, the sampling strategy of purposive sampling lends itself to the credibility of the findings of this research, since the participants will be those who experienced the phenomenon under investigation.

*Interviews*

Patton (2002) defines interviews as open-ended questions and probes that pursue information about people’s experiences and their knowledge about a particular setting. According to Yin (2003), qualitative interviewing is among the most utilized data collection methods of qualitative case study research. In the current study, qualitative interviews served to purposefully guide the conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) as opposed to a structured line of inquiry. Although the researcher used a consistent line of inquiry through an interview guide (See Appendix C), the actual stream of questions were more fluid than rigid.

Patton (2002) acknowledges that qualitative interviewing, for research purposes is not without its strengths and weaknesses. Both Creswell (2007) and Patton (2002)
outline similar advantages/strengths and challenges of qualitative interviewing which include:

1. The ability of participants to describe what is meaningful or important from their own perspective rather than being restricted to a predetermined category.

2. The researcher is allowed to probe for more details in order to increase the comparability of responses.

3. Researchers have the flexibility to utilize their knowledge, expertise and interpersonal skills to explore phenomenon raised by participants through multiple interviews. According to Patton, (2002) multiple interviews reduce researcher “bias” (p. 349).

As outlined by Patton (2002) conducting qualitative interviews present with challenges.

1. Misrepresentation of responses as a result of researcher bias, lack of knowledge and politics.

2. The collection of qualitative interview data is prone to recall errors, reactivity of research participants and self promoting purposes of the researcher.

3. Conducting, analyzing and interpreting qualitative interviews can be time consuming.

In the current study, before each individual interview, participants filled out a basic demographics form related to age, classification, former high school attended, GPA and major. The answers served to build rapport, and to act as a springboard for question development during the actual interviews, which focused on culture and achievement, perceptions of urban race and place, benefits of the merit based scholarship program, campus environment, engagement and persistence. Through the lens of CRT, answers from the interviews unearthed issues related to power and privilege in the educational processes relative to climate, supportive infrastructures and interactions with peers, faculty and staff. The framework of CRT highlighted dominant themes found through
the literature of the Black experience at PWIs, as well as emergent themes embedded in their co-curricular experiences.

Interview participants were selected based upon purposeful sampling and participated in semi-structured, open-ended in-depth interviews. Interviews with current and former scholarship recipients took place on campus in Alden library. In addition, a former Urban Scholar’s interview was held at a local library in the town where she resided after graduation, which was recommended by the participant. Interviews were audio taped and lasted approximately 1-1½ hours each. After the interviews, the researcher transcribed and coded data. The researcher conducted 2 follow-up interviews to establish credibility, gain clarity from first interview responses and fill in missing information. Following the second interview, all participants were given transcribed interviews to review for accuracy. To ensure confidentiality, participants were allowed to choose their own pseudonyms, unless they choose not to be anonymous.

The interviews were conducted as an open dialogue between participants and the researcher. During interviews, students were compelled to reflect on their co-curricular experiences while attending OU, and the answers they provided generated inductive themes without the researcher having to predetermine this information. The respondents’ depths of emotions were captured, along with their thoughts about what occurred during matriculation, through their own perspective. As this information unfolded, the task of the researcher was to provide the framework so participants were able to respond in an open and accurate manner. There were a total of thirteen interviews conducted (i.e. Ten
Urban Scholars, 3 campus leaders). The researcher spent 4 months in the field conducting data.

Qualitative interviewing ontologically suggests that people’s knowledge, understanding, interpretations, experiences and views are meaningful (Berg, 2000). To add in-depth meaning to this case study, in addition to interviews, the researcher gathered documents to aid in the full expression and understanding of contextual ideas presented by participants. To further contextualize the historical nature of the U.S. programs’ inception, the researcher interviewed campus leaders who had institutional memory about the program’s inception as well as leaders whose offices provide infrastructural support for multicultural students.

Documents

Patton (2002) characterizes documents as any written or published materials, reports personal diaries, and written responses to open-ended surveys. For case study research, the utility of documents is to substantiate evidence from various data source (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, documents serve to augment the research and trustworthiness through multiple means of data sources and make the research as trustworthy as possible (Glesne, 2006; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) outlines three strengths of documents. First, documents verify correct spellings, titles and organizational names referenced throughout the interviews. Next they provide researchers with precise and detailed information from a range of sources. Finally, inferences made from documents can be used as a springboard for further investigation rather than definitive findings to avoid false leads.
According to Patton (2002), documents have limitations, such as incomplete or inaccurate data; they are restricted to what already exists; and they vary in quality and comprehensive nature of data - with a great sum of data available in some documents and almost nil information in other documents - hence, the need for multiples data sources. In the current study, documents used for analysis included: university documents, newspaper articles, newsletters and other artifacts to contextualize the study (e.g. flyers, announcements, primary data sources from the office of institutional research). Gathered documents for this study provided a historical and contextual dimension to participant interviews, and they enriched participant narratives by supporting, expanding and challenging the researcher’s interpretation and analysis. Documents were gathered over several months.

Content analysis is described as a carefully, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of data with an eye to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings (Berg & Latin, as cited in Berg, 2009). According to Berg (2009), content analysis can be carried out on various forms of human communication, which include written documents, photographs, motion pictures, videotapes and audiotapes. In the current study, content analysis exhausted the account of each variation within the participant narratives, which further validated the findings and supported the contextual understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Also it was used to analyze the documents as well.

Berg (2000) outlined the pros and cons of content analysis, and relative to strengths, content analysis is viewed as being unobtrusive and nonreactive, where no one needs to be interviewed or answer lengthy questionnaires; it is cost effective and it
provides a means whereby the researcher can study a process over extended periods. Limitations of content analysis include locating unobtrusive messages relevant to the research questions and its ineffectiveness for testing causal relationships between variables. In sum, Berg (2009) suggests the analysis of content is “a passport to listen to the words of the text and understanding better the perspective(s) of the producer of these words” (p. 343).

Member Checks

As noted by Patton (2002), using participants to assess the research findings is a triangulated approach whereby participant feedback assist researchers in confirming the research findings. Specifically, the extent to which the Urban Scholars are unable to relate to and confirm the findings and analysis may speak to the credibility of the findings. Berg (2009) discusses a similar concept of investigator triangulation, which consist of multiple observers of the same object. Although member checks may be accompanied by a degree of anxiety this reflective triangulation adds the research participant’s reactions to the triangulation mix - further strengthening the credibility of the evaluation report (Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis Procedures

An analysis of data in qualitative research involves preparation and a systematic organization of data, reduction of data into manageable chunks of information and a final and accurate representation of the data in narrative form, figures and tables (Creswell, 2007). Since qualitative inquiry is specifically orientated towards exploration, discovery and inductive logic (Patton, 2002) thematic patterns emerged from the ground up, rather
than the top-down. Hence, the researcher gained an understanding of the multiple interrelationships among various dimensions that emerge from the data without making a priori assumptions (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Moustakas (1994) outlines a systematic approach in the qualitative analysis of data which involves construction of data in a multifaceted manner whereby research questions build on each other. For instance, researchers highlight noteworthy sentences, phrases and string of ideas that lends itself to understanding the phenomena under investigation, from the research participants’ perspective. Moustakas (1994) refers to these steps as horizontalization. In addition, Creswell (2007) suggests that the researcher develop clusters of meaning from the significant statements and emerging themes - using them to write a detailed textural description (Creswell, 2007).

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) recommend that the analysis of data as well as the data collection be done simultaneously. Hence, in the current research, collected data was transcribed and analyzed as it was collected. As the data was collected and transcribed, the central steps of coding the data included a grouping of coded chunks of information into themes, and representing these findings in narratives, graphs, tables and charts. In addition, the researcher provided detailed steps in the process, which included writing marginal notes and field notes, and noting relationships among categories, as suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2011).

Recording and Managing Data

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011) recording and managing qualitative research data is time consuming and does not occur in a step-wise fashion. In the current
study, the central research questions and related literature served as guidelines for which pieces of data were analyzed and which tenants of CRT were most applicable. This planning created several categories as data was analyzed, from emergent themes and eventually coded, categorized and labeled. In the current study, data management was conducted in a traditional manner, without software - to highlight the thinking and meticulous mechanics involved in the analytical process. The analysis began by reading through field and marginal notes, memos, thoughts and insights and filtering through interview transcripts. Although transcripts were read several times, the first reading served to begin the formal coding in a systematic way, while subsequent readings served to compare data for clarity and comparison of within group differences. The use of an organized color coding system assisted in differentiating ideas, concepts and emergent themes, and allowed for data reduction into manageable chunks, which were easily retrievable (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Wolcott (1994) characterizes data analysis as a second category of data transformation. This method typically extends the description in a systematic manner. In the current study, analysis of data allowed the research to develop a solid base from which to begin writing the narrative and descriptive parts of the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This analysis allowed the researcher to construct a typology or set of related concepts germane to the co-curricular experiences of successful urban Blacks matriculating through a rural PWI. Furthermore, it allowed the researcher to decide the dimensions along which these concepts varied. As noted by Rubin and Rubin (2005), this process will “force” (p. 213) the researcher to be clear about the semantics of each
dimension, refined meanings, elaborate on concepts and emergent themes and make recommendations concerning what needs to be added, pulling out broader implications for the research study and signaling a call to action (Patton, 2002).

**Ethics**

Glesne (2006) suggests that novice researchers tend to view their role strictly as gathering data; however, as researchers gain more experience in fieldwork, their roles begin to shift depending upon the purpose and procedures, personal characteristics of the researchers and personal attributes of research participants. As noted by Glesne (2006), several ethical dilemmas accompany each role that qualitative researcher easily assume: exploiter (using others), reformer (researchers rights what they judge wrong), advocate (champion a cause), and friend (gaining access to intimate information given to you in the context of friendship rather than a researcher). Due to the power dynamics and nature of qualitative interviewing, Patton (2002) suggests the best interest of the researcher lies in their ability to have an ethical framework for dealing with such issues (Patton, 2002).

To guard against unethical research practices, Patton (2002) provides a checklist of ethical issues as a way for researchers to begin contemplating the significance of the research design, collection of data and the analysis of data - which was also implemented in the current research study and were explicated in the lay summary (See Appendix B): (1) the purpose of the inquiry and methods was explained in an accurate and comprehensible manner, (2) the reciprocity of the research study was clearly outlined, (3) research participants were made aware of all risk(s) involved in the study, (4) a statement of confidentiality was provided, (5) informed consent was provided, as recommended by
the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and (6) a statement concerning data access was provided.

**Credibility and Trustworthiness**

As noted by Patton (2002), the commonality regarding the discussion of credibility highlights the significance of intellectual rigor, professional honesty and methodological competence. Although there are no clear cut rules about how to conduct a reliable, high-quality analysis of research data, the charge is to do the best job possible. In the current qualitative study, the researcher assured issues of credibility and trustworthiness by returning to data sources multiple times to determine whether or not the constructs, emergent themes, analysis and interpretations made sense (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, the researcher conducted fieldwork over four months that yielded high-quality data that was systematically analyzed (Patton, 2002), and accurately reflected the nature of the lived experiences of urban Black youth attending a rural PWI. Creswell (2007) outlines several strategies used by qualitative researchers to augment the trustworthiness of a research study. In this study, the researcher made use of several methods, data sources and co-investigators to substantiate evidence that supported emergent themes and perspectives. Through triangulation as a marker of credibility, the researcher used a combination of methods, data sets and theories to assure the believability and trustworthiness of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Limitations**

In qualifying the overall interpretations of the current study, results should be considered within the context of which the phenomenological case study was conducted -
that is a rural PWI. As such, one of the limitations of the current study is that urban Blacks from one rural PWI site were included in the study. According to the Office of Institutional Research (2010), there was a 4.5% Black enrollment at the university. Of the total current and former Urban Scholar Scholarship recipients (n=55), ten students (or 18%) participated in the current research study. This small sample size is not large enough to address the dynamic interactions of race, class, culture and gender simultaneously. Hence, the findings of the current study should not be applied to a larger population of urban Blacks attending rural PWIs. Although the researcher does not envision the current study replacing prior research on Blacks attending a PWI, it does extend the extant literature by explicating the complexities of urbanization and the importance of geographical space and place with implications for high school guidance counselors, campus leaders, student affairs personnel, multicultural centers and retention offices and units who support diversity initiatives and institutions who aim to create a campus climate of inclusion. Although findings from the current study are not generalizable, when combined with similar qualitative studies, the possibility of generalizing is enhanced - namely the transferability or the extent to which the research results can be generalized or transferred to other context or settings that are similar in scope.

Another possible limitation of the current study is the exclusion of freshmen from the study. The current sample was restricted by classification to obtain answers from the most knowledgeable and informed participants. Since freshmen would have been in their 3rd quarter at the university and were not far removed from their high school experience,
the researcher suggests the retrospective explanations may have drawn more heavily on
their secondary experiences rather than their postsecondary experiences.

An additional limitation is the lack of observations in academic and social
settings. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2002), this triangulation provides a broader
picture by combining dissimilar methods of data collection and it provides the researcher
with a means of constantly comparing data gathered using a multiple collection of
techniques as part of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In lieu of observations, the
researcher opted to use participants as co-constructors of knowledge (Patton, 2002), as a
way to determine accuracy through member checks.

**Self as Researcher**

According to Creswell (2007) when entering the field, the researcher should enter
with as few predetermined ideas, theories or a priori assumptions as possible. To
minimize subjectivity Moustakas (1994), recommends that researchers epoche/ bracket
personal experiences to the extent where the researcher is able to take a fresh perspective
towards the experiences of participants (i.e. Urban Scholar). Although Moustakas (1994)
posits that this fresh perspective is seldom achieved, the current researcher acknowledges
the intersubjectivity, or interpretation of someone else’s subjective experience (Glesne,
2006). Rather than pretending to enter the current research study without bias, the
researcher further acknowledges the importance of listening to participants while
continually sifting through personal and cultural experiences - a strength of qualitative
research (Foster, 1993; Irvine, 2006; Tillman, 2002). While educational researchers
support culturally specific research practices (Bishop, 1998); encourage liberatory
education (Gordon, 1994); decolonizing methodologies (Smith, 2005); culturally responsive evaluations (Hood, 2001) and the use of an ethnographic eye (Heath, 1995) or cultural eye (Irvine, 2006) from an insider’s (emic) perspective (Foster, 1993), this collective body of literature speaks to the need of researchers to capture the full range of qualitative perspectives from a cultural standpoint. To this end, the current researcher attempted to make the “strange familiar and the familiar strange” (Erickson, as cited in Glesne, 2006, p. 51) by acknowledging the connoisseurship or expertise she brought to the current study.

Working in a urban school district for 8 years as a licensed speech-language pathologist, the researcher was able to witness firsthand the educational disparities illustrated throughout the urban education literature (i.e. poverty, poor building structure, crime, hidden curriculum, low-tax base, under resourced programs, low achievement). The experiences of urban youth at the primary and secondary levels impact their educational performances at the postsecondary level. As a Black female who attended a rural predominantly Black secondary institution, with mainly low-income Blacks, and who worked in an urban school district with predominantly low-income Blacks, the researcher acknowledges that her educational and professional work experiences paralleled those of the research participants to some degree. These years of experiences, both in and outside of the classroom provided the researcher with a unique ability and skill set in understanding the importance of social capital, mentorship, and the socio-cultural alienation associated with attending a PWI. As the research instrument, the
researcher brings a wealth of experience, both professional and educationally, and connoisseurship to the current research study.

Patton (2002) uses of the term of connoisseurship to describe the expertise researchers bring to their study. For the researcher conducting the current study, this means there is a potential of making highly interpretive value judgments about the merits of what research participants described. Although cultural standpoint is a strength of qualitative interviewing, according to Rubin and Rubin (2005), active involvement can create problems, in that the personal emotions and biases of the researcher influences how data is interpreted. To further mitigate bias, the researcher analyzed participant narratives through the lens of CRT, since its tenants unearth issues of power and privilege, challenged the social construction of race and subsequent operation of racism in education at both the secondary and postsecondary levels (Bernal, 2002; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Gillborn, 2005; Iverson, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Milner, 2008b; Parker et al., 1999;; Parker, 1998; Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano et al., 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tate, 1997; Taylor, 2000; Yosso et al., 2004; Yosso, 2005). Finally this theoretical framework disrupted the dominant racial paradigms (Solórzano et al., 2001) in urban education literature and challenged widespread notions of meritocracy, equality, colorblindness and impartiality related to the education of racial minorities (Parker et al., 1999). Through this lens, the researcher was able to compensate for any slant, allowing for the voices of research participants to clearly prevail.
Conclusion

Urban Blacks in the current study successfully negotiated the terrains of secondary education are matriculating through a rural PWI and their stories, embedded with successes and challenges warrant consideration. The resiliencies of participants, as embodies in their counterstories, illustrate the acquisition of tools and strategies necessary for daily survival in a predominantly White rural academic space that often excludes and silences non-White (Burbules, 2005). In fact, Boler (2005) suggests that “universities in general function as “white men’s clubs” and by default function to empower those who already hold privileges positions within the “real” world” (p. 5).

Research on race, class, gender and culture relative to Black education, has largely focused on social or cultural assimilation, deficits and conflicts (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995); however, as outlined in the history of Black education, Blacks have a record of valuing education in the larger context of societal spaces and places that restrict their full participation (Anderson, 1988; Bell, 1995a; Butchart, 1988; Fairclough, 2007; Sitkoff, 1993). Unfortunately, these historical conditions have created the contemporary educational milieu for Blacks attending postsecondary institutions. To disrupt these notions, researchers posit that educational practices supported by policies that build on the cultural strengths of Blacks (Milner, 2008a; Noguera, 1996; Weiner, 2003), will increase the understanding of how Blacks successfully navigate postsecondary institutions.
Chapter 4: Below the Waterline: Hewing Stones of Hope from Urban Spaces

Participant Profiles

Before introducing the ten research participants the researcher wishes to thank them for sharing their stories and entrusting the researcher to replicate, analyze and theorize their words. Although some accounts were difficult to recall, full with joy and with a dash of humor, the researcher understands their willingness to participate allowed the “experiential knowledge of people of color” (Matsuda et al., 1993, p. 6) to challenge mainstream assumptions and discourse (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Dixon & Rousseau, 2005; Milner, 2008a) about what it means to be urban. The names of the participants used in the research study are pseudonyms. Narratives from this diverse group of Urban Scholars, who hailed from various geographical, social and academic trajectories, provide a glimpse of insight into the lives of Black urban undergraduates at a rural PWI. This dissertation is grounded in their awe-inspiring lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002).

Abigail was in the inaugural class of Urban Scholars in 2004 and her major was Family Studies. Abigail’s mother and older siblings all attended college and her siblings completed their Bachelor degrees. Abigail did not see herself as the stereotypical urban African American female. She explained, “I’m not like anybody in my neighborhood and they will tell you that.” She wanted the larger campus community to know that all urban Blacks should not be placed “in the same pot. We’re all different. We’re not all the same. All of us are not thugs, welfare queens or ghetto. What you see on television is
for entertainment purposes” (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011). She has a son and aspires to open a day-care center and turn it into a family center.

*Akeem* is a junior at the university majoring in International Marketing and Japanese. Akeem is a first generation college student and has 8 siblings. His parents did not attend college; however, his older brother attended college, but did not complete his degree. He enjoyed spending five months in Japan studying abroad and hopes to teach English in Japan or become involved in urban planning after graduating. He wants everyone to know he is “a person like everybody else and I put my pant leg on one leg at a time, just like you” (Akeem, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

*Angel* was in the first class of Urban Scholars. She graduated from the university with a degree in English/Pre-law and is currently pursuing a Masters Degree in Student Affairs in Higher Education, with the goal of becoming a Vice-President of Student Affairs. Neither of her parents attended college and she has 2 younger sisters. One of her siblings attends college and the youngest hopes to attend college soon. Angel stated “Not all African American students come to college to be athletes. Not all come from bad backgrounds, and a lot have good lives. At the end of the day African Americans are no different. We go through the same struggles and have family problems. If you take time, you might actually find similarities or learn something” (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

*Aqbar* is a senior Sociology major who aspires to work with urban male youth and a K-16 pipeline initiative program. His mother did not attend college, relegating him as a first generation college student. Aqbar has 4 younger siblings and characterized himself
as a “product of his environment.” He explained he could never think about going back home and dropping out of school, leaving him to face his mother, those who look up to him and the entire neighborhood” (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011).

_Cee Cee_, a junior majoring in Sociology was a first generation college student. Cee Cee’s father did not complete high school; however, her mother completed high school, but did not complete her postsecondary education. Cee Cee was raised in a single family household with 1 younger sibling. According to Cee Cee, the circumstances of her life have driven her aspirations of being a college professor with a concentration on children of incarcerated parents, class divisions and sexuality. She stated, “I don’t think I fit into that [urban] stereotype at all. Where I come from…I just look at myself …as a Black woman trying to make it” (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 4, 2011).

_Christopher_ was a 5th year senior, majoring in Media Arts and Science, with a minor in African American Studies. His mother received her Bachelors’ degree from Ohio State University and a Master’s Degree from Cornell University. Christopher was raised in a single parent household with special needs foster brothers and sisters. After graduation, Christopher is considering attending law school. As an urban African American - Columbian male, he described himself as “more the exception than the norm” (Christopher, personal communication, May 2, 2011).

_Eve_, the youngest participant, was a sophomore at the university majoring in Biology/Pre-Medicine. Her mother attended college and her sister is currently enrolled in college. Eve identified as a Black Jamaican. Raised in a single parent household, she has 8 step siblings from her biological father. She stated, “Blacks view education as
something important. That’s why we’re here [at the university] so we can get a degree and finish our goals. We are people, as you and we have similar goals, but our culture is different” (Eve, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

Jasmine was in the first class of Urban Scholars. She is a university alumnus who graduated with her Master’s degree in Teacher Education with a focus in Adolescent-to-Young-Adult Integrated Language Arts. Her mother received an Associate’s Degree and her father enlisted in the United State Navy following high school. She considered herself a first generation college student since “my mother had me at a very young age and was only able to get her Associates. So she really didn’t have the full college experience” (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011). Jasmine has 2 younger siblings who live at home with her mother and step father. She wanted the larger campus community to understand that “every person is different so don’t view us [Blacks] as a whole, but as individuals and don’t judge a book by its cover” (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011).

Karmah was a junior majoring in Management Information Systems and Marketing. Neither parent attended college. Karmah is a first generation college student and the youngest of 5 children. Although she is the “youngest, darkest and smallest” she felt as if she carried “the weight of my siblings” (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011). Karmah admitted that identifying as an urban African American Haitian female has “its pros and cons. I love being an African American female. I love proving people wrong. That’s just how I am” (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011).
Stephanie was a junior majoring in Theatre, which was her “gateway out.” She described herself as a “second mom” to her 5 younger sisters and brothers - all of whom are being raised by their grandmother. She is a first generation college student who described her college experience as “fun but hard.” Stephanie credits her grandmother’s strict, yet regimented household rules about relationships and faith as a major factor in her college success. When asked how she viewed herself as an African American female, she described both the master narrative and her own understanding of self. Stephanie stated “I can be loud and misunderstood sometimes. It seems like I’m supposed to fit this stereotype of being loud, ghetto, independent and don’t-need-no-man type attitude. But I view myself as very open to different people, different opinions and different experiences” (Stephanie, personal communication, May 6, 2011).

Evelynn was an alum of OU and worked closely with multicultural students on retention initiatives. At the time of the interview she had been at the university for less than 9 months and is pleased to see “students actually make a successful transition while being able to retain them” (Evelynn, personal communication, May 18, 2011).

Calvin served in an executive level position and assisted the university “to make sure that we recruit and retain a diverse population of students as well as implement programs, activities and initiatives that help those student to feel more affirmed and nurtured in their experience at OU (Calvin, personal communication, June 28, 2011). Overall he perceived there is a broad commitment and support from the university administration concerning inclusive excellence.
Chase was an alum of OU in the late 1960s at a time when the university was “when the university was really making a big push to increase the number of African American students” (Chase, personal communication, July 19, 2011). He has served in an executive level position at the university since 2004.

The current and former Urban Scholars interviewed all self identified as African American, although some participants mentioned their race and ethnicity were layered by multi ethnic and cultural status (e.g. Columbian, Haitian, Jamaican). The participants used the word Black/ African American as a racial marker to explain their collective experiences of growing up in urban geographical locations while transitioning to a rural PWI to pursue postsecondary educational opportunities. Hence, the researcher used the terminology of “African American” and “Black” interchangeably as being inclusive of members from the African Diaspora, who are considered multi-generation Blacks and children of immigrants from the continent of Africa. Research contends that for immigrant students who attend PWIs, there is a continual negotiation with the home and college institutional culture that serves as an impetus for achieving, succeeding and negotiating their educational experiences and persistence in college (Maramba, 2008). Participant narratives will bare that their families served as catalyst in motivating them to attend and matriculate through college (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Stephanie</td>
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<td>Evelyn</td>
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As with any geographical space and place, the urban areas participants call home, shaped and continue to shape the dynamics of their human social and cross-cultural interactions. These geographical spaces and places reflect the organization of social life, its depiction and awareness, how it is perceived and the various ways individuals react and cope in these contexts. Members of urban communities have had minimal influential input into shaping the master narrative related to their housing, education and economic circumstances (Scheurich & Young, 1997; Tillman, 2002). According to educational research and racialized epistemologies, a master narrative is a script that identifies and is in charge of how social processes are understood and carried out (Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Scheurich & Young, 1997). As such, there is a master narrative operating in the formation of urban areas that defines, restricts, constricts and validates who is entitled to create knowledge within these spaces.

The re-presentation of these geographical locales can be problematic, from those who reify the master narrative, since people who occupy urban spaces and places are primarily Black and Hispanic, and continue to have limited input in shaping the validation of their own experiences. For instance, the attention to urban re-presentation, rhetoric and discourse in media has largely shaped how urban spaces and places are viewed. Films like *Menace II Society, New Jack City and Boyz -N- the Hood* all embrace the relationship between material reality, the language and behaviors used to re-present urban spaces. Furthermore, these films illustrate countless social behaviors and ascribed meanings of urban landscapes (i.e. South Central Los Angeles, Compton and New York) and those who occupy them. In this study, research participants juxtapose these
arguments through counter narratives, which highlight the inability of master narratives to represent accurate variations of urban living among Black youth and others who occupy these spaces and places. As such, research participants draw attention to images of re-presentation, power struggles and privilege paradigms associated with race, class, culture and gender.

According to Stuart Hall (1996), when you represent there is an experience of power that alters the way others see you and how groups are viewed through the depiction of representation. This representation becomes different when someone else has control over re-presenting their assessment of persons or groups of people, their social behaviors and identity markers (Hall, 1996). In stark contrast to the master narrative, research participants discussed the importance of recognizing how privileged stories (i.e. media) work to define how they win or lose, achieve, succeed or fail and how the story line of the master narrative, described mainly in racially identifiable terms, affects how they socially interact with their environment and others who occupy these spaces. This next section addresses the processes of urbanization from a multidimensional view - that is from the perspectives of urban Black male and females. By moving away from the one dimensional perspective, participants illustrate their struggle in redefining the master narrative and the power relations which produce them in the first place. Aqbar and Abigail explain.

The communities we live in are plagued with drugs and violence. Arrests rates and teen pregnancy are high, but the reasons behind these circumstances are misconceived…A lot of people are just doing whatever they can to survive. It’s like a community feel in our neighborhood that an outsider couldn’t achieve. Society would give it a negative connotation, but it is really like a sense of
community and a sense of oneness…It’s like a village where you take care of yourself and others (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011).

When people hear urban the first thing others might think is ghetto. When I hear urban, I think of my neighborhood. We are from an urban area and I don’t see it in a negative way. It’s my neighborhood. It’s where I was born and raised (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011).

Space and place are familiar words used to denote common experiences that are descriptive of territories marked off and defended against by intruders, as noted by Aqbar. Abigail affirms that urban space is a place encapsulated by boundaries where communal values, traditions and social and behavioral patterns develop and emerge. The depiction of urban space and place, from their perspectives, is key to understanding the frames of social phenomena. In fact, geographical scholars suggests taking an in depth look at the interactions between people occupying space and place and their environment in order to understand phenomena (Buendía, Ares, Juarez, & Peercy, 2004; Kaplan et al., 2009; Ledwith, & Clark, 2007; Massey, 1984; Massey & Denton, 1993; Pulido, 2000; Rogalsky, 2009). In an attempt to explore the interactions of Urban Scholars and the White academic and social spaces they occupy, this study examined the intersection and overlapping affects of race, class, culture and genders within a contextual space and time - a rural PWI. Throughout the study, the researcher was privileged to access the cultural standpoints, opinions and perceptions of Urban Scholars from two urban epicenters across the state of Ohio. From the participants perspective, this chapter conceptualizes the transitory educational and social processes of moving from urban to rural space and place by examining per pupil spending expenditures, typologies of Ohio school districts and
how the intersection of these variables shape the urban context and the educational experiences of those occupying these spaces.

**Urban Ohio’s “Savage” Inequalities**

Now more than ever African American and Latino/a students are bearing the heaviest cost of *Brown* in American secondary public schools (Bell, 1980; Bell, 2000; Bell, 2004; Boykin & Jones, 2004; Carroll et al., 2004; Futrell, 2004; Kluger, 1975; O’Brien, 2007; Patterson, 2001). A methodological review of the historiography of Black education following slavery, through the period of Reconstruction, to *Brown* illustrates several themes that point towards the dual nature of U.S. secondary education.

Long before Kozol (1991) examined the social inequalities that existed among the educational experiences of White middle-class students and poor Black and Latino students, Horace Mann Bond (as cited in Spring, 2007) found an interest in these disparities during the 1930s. In his study, *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order*, Mann (as cited in Spring, 2007) discovered that per pupil expenditures for Blacks were higher than those for White during Reconstruction. During the 1880s and 1900s, the fiscal expenditures were reversed and Whites reportedly received four to five times more monies in per pupil expenditures when compared to their Black counterparts (Mann, as cited in Spring, 2007). The major findings of this report indicate that southern schools who housed Black students were far more inferior to other schools in the quality of education and in the physical structural conditions (Mann, as cited in Spring, 2007).

In the antebellum era, education for Blacks across the south was not easily attainable since it was prohibited to teach reading and writing to slaves (Moss, 2009).
However, Douglas (2005) posits that Black education in the North was far more complicated where Blacks were excluded as well as assigned racially inferior and separate schools. From the 19th century to the present, Black and White historians have used various names to differentiate and describe this dual system of education existent for Blacks and Whites in the U.S. such as cultural theory of racial subordination (Anderson, 1988); scientific racism (Watkins, 2001b), hidden transcripts (Scott, 1990); savage inequalities and apartheid schools (Kozol, 1991); inequality of schools (Bell, 2004); schooling and education (Shujaa, 1994); deculturalization (Spring, 2007); de facto segregation (U.S. Supreme Court); resegregation (O’Brien, 2007); and two-tiered education system (Carroll et al., 2004). Consequently, many educational researchers are persuaded this constructed duality is not accidental, but intentionally embedded within the institutional structure.

Researchers have documented dual systems of education, specifically the duality and educational inequities in urban education (Clotfelter, 2001; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Noguera, 2004; Morris, 2004; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005; Rury, 2005) and how it affects the postsecondary college choice process (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Hossler et al., 1989; Kim & Rury, 2007; Kurlaender & Flores, 2005; Milner, 2008a; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002). This body of literature calls attention to the failed policies and educational practices of urban schools in their attempts to prepare students for postsecondary education.

In support of Anderson’s (1988) position concerning the importance of the historical analysis of Blacks and their quest for education and to understand the level of
academic preparation for urban students, a closer look at the secondary experiences of Urban Scholars will inform the readers understanding of how students navigate postsecondary institutions. Furthermore, an examination of the K-16 pipeline highlights the different educational practices (i.e. secondary, postsecondary) and the duality of educational systems (e.g. funding, urban/suburban) that is familiar to these students. This panoramic view of educational practices is critical in understanding how aspects of the Black educational experience impacts each level and experience in their quest for education.

Although students in this study attended urban high schools, that were largely segregated based upon race and class, student narratives illustrate the concerted efforts of students to learn independently in the face of power and privilege dynamics that restricted their educational opportunities and upward social mobility. These dual systems of education work to create dual academic achievement outcome measures, also known as the racial achievement gap. It creates dual labor forces, dual residential areas and a stratified society based on race and class; and for some it has produced a dual consciousness, as indicated by a campus leader, who attended an urban school in Ohio.

Most of the schools have a vocation track... When you first come in they immediately try to get you on a vocational track. You have to choose within that first quarter which track you’d be on...In 9th grade, if you didn’t choose they just place you in a vocation. I was initially in the auto cad vocation. I liked it but I didn’t see myself doing anything with it. It was hard getting into video production....All of the students gravitated to that good teacher, but if you got a bad teacher, well....My science classes were watching Bill Nye the Science Guy. So that was the level of preparation. Math classes were focused on proficiency and if you passed the proficiency tests then you got an “A” for the year. But it didn’t prepare you for the next level of math. So I was very behind and I didn’t know anything for geometry. If you had these teachers, all you had to do was
pass the math part of the proficiency tests and you didn’t do anything for the rest of the school year (Evelyn, personal communication, May 18, 2011).

What Evelyn explained is a typical example of curriculum tracking, which illustrates the forceful nature of mapping the curriculum onto students at an early age. For urban students, these forced and restricted curriculum choices limit intergenerational mobility related to educational and career choices. In turn, this perpetuates social inequality through institutions of education (Boykin, 2001; Green, 1999; Watkins, 2001a; Watkins, 2001b). For instance, Evelyn discussed the difficulty she faced when attempting to gain access to a higher curriculum track (e.g. advanced placement courses).

After that first year, for the first time in my life I had all Cs and really didn’t know why. I realized I was not doing anything. The motivation level wasn’t there. I passed the proficiency so what else was there to do…I talk to my advisor about getting out of regular English and because I didn’t come from a National Blue Ribbon School I could not go on to honors classes at John F. Kennedy. Because switching classes was above me, he [teacher] had to end up writing a letter to the advisor to let me into this honor’s track. It was met with a lot of resistance, which I didn’t understand because if a student wants to do more work, why stop them? I got into that honors class, which opened up the door for me to get into other honors classes. My grades changed and were higher because I was doing work and learning (Evelyn, personal communication, May 18, 2011).

As Evelyn continued to discuss her disdain for curriculum tracking, she expounded upon the stark differences between the curriculum content in the regular and advanced courses. Evelyn’s narrative hints that ability grouping/curriculum tracking are inefficient, unfair educational practices that hinder learning and distributes learning inequitably. A CRT analysis would link the content of school curricula to Harris’ (1995) notion of Whiteness as property, who, according to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), can take the form of curriculum representing intellectual property in both unambiguous and implied ways. For instance, property tax relief debates reveal that affluent communities
with high property value and taxes are not willing to funnel monies into a public school system that does not benefit them or their children - especially if the population is heavily populated with low-income minorities (Anderson, 1988; Fairclough, 2007). In this manner, both the quality and quantity of the classroom curricula changed in relation to the property value attributed to the school.

Ohio’s history of controversy surrounding school funding practices has been ongoing for two decades (DeRolph v. State, 1997; Baker, 2007). For twenty years, educators, parents, students and communities have wrestled to find a viable solution that provides ample resources to meet the students’ basic educational needs. Perry (2011) reported that in 1991, the Ohio Coalition for Equity and Adequacy of School Funding filed a lawsuit arguing the state of Ohio did not provide an adequate education for students, due to its funding formula that relies strongly on property taxes to fund educational initiatives. Resultantly, between 1997-2002, the Ohio Supreme Court affirmed the state’s school funding formulate to be inequitable and unconstitutional, as promised by the Ohio Constitution. The Supreme Court case of DeRolph v. State (1997) recognized that:

Disparities between school districts will always exist. By our decision today, we are not stating that a new financing system must provide equal educational opportunities for all. In a Utopian society, this lofty goal would be realized. We, however, appreciate the limitations imposed upon us. Nor do we advocate a ‘Robin Hood’ approach to school financing reform. We are not suggesting that funds be diverted from wealthy districts and given to the less fortunate. There is no ‘leveling down’ component in our decision today (DeRolph v. State, 1997, p 41).

Although Ohio lawmakers have mandated measures to bring districts closer to constitutional language of providing a “thorough and efficient” education, some believe
that policies are already in place that leverages the educational playing field for students attending different school types. Ouchi (2004) contends that, “Today’s urban school districts have more than enough money in their budgets to do their jobs well. Now the challenge is to organize them so as to maximize their efficiency and performance” (p. 1). In spite of Ouchi’s (2004) statement these facts are disputed in district report cards which declare that students from low-income communities lag behind academically when compared to more affluent neighborhoods (Ohio Department of Education, 2011). More recently, in a Buckeye Institute report, Baker (2007) suggested that Ohio had adequately addressed the between district inequality.

Despite the opinions of Ouchi (2004) and Baker (2007), a closer examination of primary data sources related to student expenditures is warranted to aid our understanding of the educational inequities in the state of Ohio. Through the utility of CRT, a nuanced story is revealed of structural racism that mobilizes Whiteness (Gillborn, 2005; Harris 1995) and questions the intentionality on the part of White power holders and education policy makers (Gillborn, 2005). This next section examines school typology and per pupil expenditures of the two urban schools districts where research participants attended between 2001 and 2010, which included the Urban Preparatory Public School District and the Early College Public School District - pseudonyms for the school districts of participants in this inquiry.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) divides all school districts into one of seven typologies (2011). According to ODE (2011), this typology of data is useful in comparing similar groupings of districts. In 2007, nine group types were identified
which cluster school districts according to geographical locale (i.e. urban, suburban, rural, small town), demographics (low to high poverty, low to high socioeconomic status) and enrollment size (ODE, 2011). According to the categories of Ohio school district typologies, the Urban Preparatory and Early College School Districts fall into cluster # 5 - urban - low median income, high poverty and cluster #6 – major urban – very high poverty. Additional categories include:

1. **Kelleys Island LSD, North Bass Island LSD, Middle Bass Island LSD, Put-in-Bay Island LSD, College Corner LSD**

2. **Rural/agricultural - high poverty, low median income.** These districts are geographically located in Appalachia Ohio and have the lowest percent of residence who have obtained a college degree compared to other clusters.

3. **Rural/agricultural - small student population, low poverty, low to moderate median income.** These districts are located outside of Appalachia Ohio; have a low degree of residence who has attained a college degree; their income levels are higher and their poverty rates are lower when compared to those in cluster 2.

4. **Rural/Small Town - moderate to high median income.** These districts are located outside of Appalachia Ohio; the median income level parallels those in cluster 5; the adult population has lower college attendance with a high representation of managerial/ professional occupations; and a below average poverty percentage.

5. **Urban - low median income, high poverty.** These districts are located in small or medium size towns and cities with a high population density; have low median incomes and very high poverty rates.

6. **Major Urban - very high poverty.** These districts encompass the 6 largest core cities. They are characterized as having a very high population density, very high poverty rates and a high enrollment of minority students.

7. **Urban/Suburban - high median income.** These districts are geographically located in urban areas; have low-average poverty levels with high median income levels; and an adult population with a high percentage of college completers part of the professional/administrative workforce.
8. **Urban/Suburban - very high median income, very low poverty.** These districts are geographically located in urban areas; have very high income levels with relatively little poverty; and an adult population with a high percentage of college degrees who work in professional/administrative occupations.

9. **Joint Vocational School Districts**

   On the surface these typologies appear to harmlessly compare and contrast similar school districts; however, a CRT analysis would suggest internal and external forces actively create these typologies based upon race and class. Furthermore, the formation of hegemonic structures, which undergird urban space and place help the formation and representation of racialized urban space of the underclass (Omi & Winant, 1994; Wilson, 1987) and it sustains an interpretation of what is occurring in these spaces (Mills, 1959). These external factors become restrictive to students attending schools that fall under cluster #5 (i.e. urban, low median income, high poverty) and cluster #6 (i.e. major urban - very high poverty) characterized by six large core cities/ major cities, with high population densities, high poverty rates, and a high concentration of minority students. Furthermore, these school typologies marked by race, demographics and class subtly illustrate (1) how educational spaces are linked inextricably to a material dimension (i.e. property tax) with a certain value through which a range of cultural meanings are attached and it exemplifies (2) a clear institutional structure that perpetuates dual educational practices (i.e. inclusion/exclusion, quality/inequity, upper/lower class and population density/space) with categorical boundaries and social systems that uphold, reify and reinforce the superiority of Whites, Whiteness (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Gillborn, 2005; Mills, 1997) and Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995).
In contemporary urban area schools, the site of contestation, as illustrated by Watkins (2001b), translates into *de facto* segregated schools (Kozol, 1991; Kozol, 2006; Ledwith & Clark, 2007; Noguera, 2000), dilapidated structural and economic school conditions (Futrell, 2004), unequal school funding formulas (Baker, 2007; *DeRolph v. State*, 1997; Kozol, 2006), high population density, school overcrowding, unsanitary and often under staffed environments (Anderson, 1988; Clotfelter, 2001; Fairclough, 2007; Ledwith & Clark, 2007; Wiggan, 2007) - all of which are historical parameters and separate educational practices implemented in southern and northern Black schooling (Franklin & Savage, 2004, Moss, 2009; Watkins, 2001a; Watkins 2001b; Williams, 2005).

The parallel nature of these dual educational practices have cast attention on the state of Ohio’s funding of K-12 public education, which allows for wide disparities in per pupil expenditures based upon affluent versus poor communities (Baker, 2007; *DeRolph*, 1997). Trend data from ODE (2011) highlight the per pupil expenditures for Urban Scholars who attended the Urban Preparatory and Early College School Districts from 2001-2010. Over the course of a decade, students attending the Urban Preparatory Public School District received a $2,200 increase in instructional expenditures (See Figure 1) and even less expenditures allocation towards support (i.e. operations, pupil and staff). Data from the Early College Public School District show a similar trend with students receiving a $2,000 increase in instructional expenditures (See Figure 2) and even lower expenditures towards support (i.e. operations, pupil and staff).
Figure 1: Urban Preparatory Public School District - School Funding.
Per Pupil Operating Expenditure.
Source: Ohio Department of Education (2011)

Figure 2: Early College Public School District - School Funding
Per Pupil Operating Expenditure.
Source: Ohio Department of Education (2011)
According to the ODE (2011), trend data from the wealthiest school district in Ohio (i.e. Kelleys Island Local School District) located in cluster #1 of the Ohio school typology showed an upward, steady trend of per pupil expenditures from $8,968 (2001) to $30,402 (2010), a difference of almost $20,000. In contrast, the poorest school district showed a slight incline from $3,460 (2001) to $3,904 (2010), a difference shy of $500. A comparative look at per pupil student expenditures in Ohio suggests that affluent school districts have more per pupil expenditures while poor districts receive less. This amounts to disparity gap of approximately $19,000 between the states haves and the have nots.

Provided that Ohio schools are clustered according to variables related to income, population density and geographical location (Ohio Department of Education, 2011), a CRT analysis of per pupil expenditures for students attending urban - low median income, high poverty schools would ascribe race as a factor in building educational hegemonic structure, although it is not explicitly stated in the school typology. To this end, Harris’ (1995) notion of Whiteness as property would claim these imaginary geographical boundaries, found under the guise of “school typologies” work to separate and exclude persons based upon race and class while accruing benefits to those outside these geographical boundaries.

This form of racialized human commodification allows for human beings (i.e. urban Blacks) to be systematically denied the complete exercise of their human capacity, while simultaneously accruing benefits to holders of racialized Whiteness (Harris, 1995). Specific to state wide educational funding, CRT scholars would compare these educational practices to commodification of students (Harris, 1995; Ladson-Billings &
Tate, 1995) whereby some students have more value than others in the educational market. Depending upon where students fall on the school typology continuum, this determines the types of educational curriculum students are able to access. Benefits for students who carry a high value include liberal curriculum, progressive education, highly qualified teachers, low teacher-pupil ratio and modern technology infused into the curriculum. According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), these collective benefits include the rights of possession, use and disposition characterized by the ability to transfer, the right to use and enjoyment, and the privilege to exclude others. By virtue, other students (i.e. urban Blacks) carry a lower value related to per pupil expenditures and are excluded from the aforementioned benefits. Hence, they have a K-12 urban educational experience filled with restricted curricula (i.e. curriculum tracking), high teacher migration patterns, high teacher-pupil classroom ratios and outdated technology (Ledwith & Clark, 2007; Milner, 2008a; Milner 2008b;

Research participants who attended Ohio typology school districts under cluster #5 and #6 were likely to reside in poverty and in many instances run the risks of getting “stuck in the cycle” (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011) with no recourse of action. For instance, ODE (2011), reported that 100% of students attending the Urban Preparatory School District from 2010 - 2011 lived in poverty, while 80% of students attending the Early College School District from 2010-2011 lived in poverty. By virtue, students who attend Ohio school districts under typologies #5 and #5 face minimum per pupil expenditures and are not granted equal access to the educational curriculum, which leaves them under prepared for postsecondary transitions. Karmah’ and Angel, who
both attended the Early College High School District, explained the level of secondary academic preparation received before they transitioned to college. “In half the [high] schools I attended we didn’t have nice books” (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011). Angel who was in the first class of Urban Scholars and graduated college with a 2.66 grade point average explained:

I know I had books from ninety one and ninety two so we didn’t have newer books. In suburban areas they have computer and access to internet. When I was in high schools we were barely even using computers and they still had floppy disks…In inner city high schools, we didn’t necessarily have all the tools available to us in order to prepare for all the exams, but we were forced to take them like everybody else. If you are trying to get people to go to college everyone should be prepared at the same level in order to accurately measure what you know (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

The rhetoric that Americans are committed to fostering stellar educational practices for all students leads many to believe that educational institutions work diligent to ensure all students are presented with equal educational opportunities. In reality, the primary data from Ohio’s school typology, and per pupil expenditures indicate variations in educational trajectories depending upon distinct variables that comprise the geographical location of schools. Few prior studies take into account the possible variations in educational trajectories of students who attended urban schools and the impact it has on the next level of education (i.e. postsecondary). Although recognizing Ohio’s per pupil expenditures as structural racism, is difficult to detect, evidence of curriculum tracking, school funding and student commodities draws attention to hegemonic power structures and the intricacy of what could happen when dollar amounts are attached to students once they enter the K-12 educational system based on where the live.
Urban schools, much like urban communities have restrictive imaginary boundaries and are rhetorically thought of as neutral sites where the Early College School District is preparing youth for leadership, service and global citizenry, when in fact student narratives illustrate the exact opposite. Research participants attending urban school districts across the state are academically underprepared, disempowered and struggle to become full citizens in a global society that exclude them at every level of educational opportunities which was explored throughout this study.

As evidenced throughout the data, there were noted parallels which existed between the historical educational practices of Blacks and the unjust dual educational system in the 21st century. Participants shared their disdain for navigating a broken educational system that undervalued who they were as raced, classed, gendered and cultured beings. Highlighting structural barriers that urban student face before transitioning to postsecondary institutions allows a contextual analysis of the geographical space and place that shapes how they interpret additional educational experiences outside of these restrictive spaces. In the section that follows, participants delve deeper into the restrictive nature of urban geographical locales and urban education, which further contextualizes urban space and place.

Typology of Urban Space and Place

Depending on where you are from, you’re going to have a different representation or meaning of urban (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011)

Urban is a community of minorities and succeeding in life is not promised to you in urban areas. You don’t have a lot of gateways to get out of that area. Sometimes you get stuck there (Stephanie, personal communication, May 6, 2011).
In this post-civil rights era, there are promising stones of hope within racialized spaces that have been hewed from urban communities despite the master narratives, the restrictive nature of urban space and place and barriers associated with urban educational opportunities. Participant counternarratives work to deconstruct the master narratives, present an alternative to the governing discourse related to urban space and place and draw attention to the individual experiences that challenge mainstream assumptions regarding the representation of the urban experience. In contrast, the two narratives (i.e. master, counter) provide examples of conflicting paradigms of understanding the social and cultural milieu of urban environments.

This section seeks to present a counter story to that which has often been written of inner city, ghetto, communities of color. It offers resistance to those who dehumanize individuals because they are thought to be entrenched in a culture of poverty (Rogalsky, 2009). Although counterstories are presented, Rogalsky (2009) suggests that many still believe bestselling books, cannons and mainstream discourse linking behaviors, neighborhoods and families to not so promising educational outcomes.

The goal of this next section is to provide the reader with a detailed analysis of the breadth and depth or urban locales (i.e. residential, education) and highlight factors that are associated with the formation of these spaces. For those living outside urban locales, the intersectionality of culture, race and space are often difficult to comprehend.

Some may understand [urban] but a lot of them [White students/ faculty] don’t. I think trying to educate them about it depends upon who’s doing it and how it’s perceived. I don’t think they get the full gist of it until they’re right there in it! We [Urban Scholars] could talk until we’re blue in the face about how it was when we were there, but until you see it firsthand then you probably won’t ever understand it (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011).
Aqbar’s statement indicates that his residential geographical location and community are inextricably linked to his racial and cultural identity. In his opinion, attempting to understand urban racialized spaces is complex in that it requires a consideration of multiple factors. In exploring the complexity of urban space and place, the researcher draws heavily on the differences of geographies to provide an explanation for how race is a factor in structuring and re-presenting the urban space. In fact, it is a well know concept that scholarship in the area of geography and other disciplines understand race to be a social construction (Inwood & Yarbrough, 2010; Omi & Winant, 1994; Spring, 2007), which has been used as historical and contemporary markers to create social boundaries, whereby boundaries determine the degree of freedom, access and mobility for those occupying these spaces. Wilson’s (1987) work, which highlights the plight of urban Blacks, examines the complexity of factors that underlie the racialized nature of the underclass, defined as

That heterogeneous grouping of families and individuals who are outside the mainstream of the American occupational system…individuals who lack training and skills with experience long-term unemployment or are not members of the labor force, individuals who are engaged in street crime and other forms of aberrant behaviors, and families that experience long-tem spells of poverty and/ or welfare dependency (Wilson, 1987, p.8).

In his expository account of the underclass, Wilson (1987) argues that factors associated with this cadre of people cannot be relegated to the simple explanation of class (i.e. culture of poverty); rather, it should involve external and internal issues that add to the deepening of social, cultural and economic plight of its residence. As framed by research participants, who put forth a critical discourse in understanding their urban
plight, their narratives illustrate the dialectical tensions associated with accurately framing their experiences. Similar to Aqbar who described urban places as a “village,” (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011), Abigail juxtaposes the supportive elements of urban space and place to some of the more dysfunctional characteristics.

I grew up in the Urban Preparatory community. It’s a lot different now than it was for me growing up. I felt a lot safer in my neighborhood, whereas people coming in probably wouldn’t feel safe. Schools and churches were almost on every corner. You had your drug dealers…our mom and pop stores. Growing up we watched out for each other. We watched out for the kids on the street. If something went wrong they [neighbors] would tell my mom. They knew who belonged on the street and who didn’t. I want to say it was like a village raising a child. Now, it’s not like that anymore. I don’t know who lives on my street. The neighborhood now is not the neighborhood I knew. Going to school and coming back, it was definitely not the neighborhood that I left (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011).

With a brief, yet accurate account of the urban context, Abigail expounded on the significance of the urban communal nature. Similar to Aqbar, she described it as “like a village” (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011) while alluding to the long series of indictment common among urban spaces and places. If fact, urban residence appear to engage in a reciprocal relationship within these spaces. Although bordered by-in-large by racial boundaries, Abigail suggests that for those not privy to an insider’s perspective, the urban cultural milieu would appear deviant and full of criminal behavior. Although not explicitly stated, her narrative is absent of external factors that shape behaviors germane to the urban context. As Massey and Denton (1993) articulate, cities do not determine their own fate, but they are part of a broader web of social, economic and political factors. In the urban neighborhood where Jasmine grew up, she was
determined to use education as a means to escape the often restrictive and oppressive quality of the urban environment.

I grew up on the South Side of College Preparatory… It was known for its high drug rate. I lived across the street from three crack houses. Police was always over there arresting somebody. A lot of people were running in and out of boarded up houses. There was lots of yelling, screaming and fighting going on in the streets. Helicopters were always flying around. It was one of those don’t-be-out-walking-by-yourself-after-it-gets-dark-outside type places. When I saw prostitutes walking up and down the street I thought that was all that it was. When we moved to another part of town I knew I wanted something different. I didn’t want to go back where I came from. I knew the only way out was to work hard and do well in school (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011).

Jasmine’s narrative indicates that despite the urban behaviors that reinforce the master narratives and elements of urban space and place, her social identity is less fixed when compared to other residents that ascribe to and take on the cloak of urban deviant and criminal behaviors. From this standpoint, Jasmine was resistant to the social behaviors of urban space close in proximity to her. Although the majority of research participants lived in urban spaces and places, a few migrated from urban to suburban spaces.

I finished out my last year at Urban Preparatory Academy. Then we moved to a suburban area when I was a sophomore in high school. We were in the suburbs so it was nice. It was like a step up. I’ve never see so many Caucasian people because I’ve always been in the urban ghetto projects…When we moved I started looking at things from a different perspective. I used to have one state of mind. I thought this is what you’re supposed to do. I thought I was supposed to find a job, make it and get on welfare. When we moved to Shaker, I started to reflect on this and realized that I had dreams and it was more to life than this (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 4, 2011).

These statements prove that neighborhoods are not merely territories, but social constructions named by geographical makers that are bounded by different varying social behaviors. For Jasmine and Cee Cee, moving from restrictive urban environments
brought a sense of agency. On one hand, Jasmine explained that education would assist
her in escaping the restrictive nature of urban space, while Cee Cee described how her
way of thinking was altered by a physical move. Together these narratives draw
attention to the significance of place, the transforming affect it has on residences and the
agency that urban student acquire during transitional movements - that is carving out
their own activity space, which does not map onto or align with the traditional urban
geographical boundaries and the behaviors associated with it. Moreover, even when
people live within urban geographical locales, it cannot be assumed that all residents
from these spaces experience the place similarly. As noted by Jasmine and Cee Cee,
although the confines of urban space have the ability to stifle social and economic
mobility, education assists their efforts in upward social mobility. Aqbar explained the
ease with which urban residence can become “stuck” in this environment if careful
consideration is not given to the structural barriers in urban spaces.

I really don’t go home much anymore since I’m in classes all the time. When I
used to go home all the time I would talk to the high school students since college
is not on a lot of their radars...Like you have nothing there and if you go home
you’ll probably get stuck there. You will probably get stuck in the same
cycle...Urban Preparatory School District graduates less than 40% of its high
school seniors. The ones who actually do graduate and go off to school can be
seen as like the upper echelon of graduates. But the ones who need it the most are
the ones still stuck in the city, in the poverty...I think the education is connected to
poverty and it’s connected to teen pregnancy and it’s connected to incarceration
rate. If you are a victim of one of them, you’re a victim of another one. Then you
get stuck in that spiral and it never ends (Aqbar, personal communication, April
29, 2011).

Aqbar is clear that an important part of the social identity development of the
successful urban youth who aspires to attend college includes preparation for deployment
in consuming urban spaces. In this manner, Aqbar suggested the restrictive nature of
urban space is difficult to circumvent if purposeful choices are not made, further driving home the belief in the power of choice. Stephanie explained how she circumvented the constriction of the city of Urban Preparatory Academy.

Succeeding in life is not promised to you in the urban areas. You don’t have a lot of gateways to get out of the area. Sometimes you’re stuck there…My gateway out was the Urban Preparatory School of the Arts because I was introduced to something that kept me out of trouble. Similar to when guys like to play sports in urban areas – and that’s their gateway out. Arts and theater was my gateway out. It was like I was able to step out of myself when I was playing different characters (Stephanie, personal communication, May 6, 2011).

How urban youth respond to some of these processes depends greatly upon their geographical location and the kinds of skills and resources they can draw upon both from within and outside of the structure. Aqbar was able to alter the constriction of the urban landscape through his time devoted to college studies. From outside of the urban structure, however, his ability to withdraw from the structure while simultaneously reaching back to educate others on the possibility of upward mobility showcases his agency and positionality.

Data from these brief narratives suggests there are two interactive dimensions to urban culture: (1) a structural dimension which constricts the upward social mobility of its residence, leaving them to be “stuck” in the urban place, and an (2) experiential dimension, constructed by media and cultural processes whereby there are limited choices (i.e. drug dealer, pregnancy, incarceration, work force). In sum, the counter narratives of students juxtaposes the representation of urban imagery and behaviors and draws attention to the choices of urban youth to “distance” (Christopher, personal communication, May 2, 2012) themselves and/or do something “different” (Jasmine,
personal communication, June 10, 2011) even in the contextual confines of a restrictive urban environment. Furthermore, participants looked to education as the “gateway” (Stephanie, personal communication, May 6, 2011) out of urban areas, which positioned them as active agents to explore promising opportunities of upward social mobility.

Creating conditions for inclusive education requires a complete assessment of structural barriers, an opportunity for optimal learning conditions and adequate resources to support student achievement. Without these elements, students attending urban schools are excluded and denied full participation in an equitable educational experience. In this study, research participants attended schools that presented with wide disparities in per pupil expenditures based upon their geographical location. Since schools in the state of Ohio are framed by typology, this type organizational structure reinforces the dual nature of educational experiences, which are largely based on clusters, population density, race and class. In fact, students in this study were capable of identifying barriers to inclusive school environments (i.e. outdated text books and technology, crowded classrooms), which further illustrates the value attached to students when a dollar amount is ascribed to their education.

In sum, the traditional urban education literature debates about issues related to unequal distribution of resources, environmental racism and institutional discrimination (Inwood & Yarbrough, 2010; Milner, 2008; Noguera, 1996; Pulido, 2000; Weiner, 2003). Although these debates disrupt notions of differences, by exploring a broader context for understanding urban education, this literature fails to consider the variation of social identities constructed within urban structures, often overlooking the overlapping effects
of racialized space. The geographical contextual framework in this study demands the use of a more refined and sensitive approach as a necessary first step that do not carry a priori assumptions that do not fully map on to the identity of urban youth. According to Inwood and Yarbrough (2010), the racialization of place is a process of constructing geographical landscapes that define and reinforce racialized social hierarchies, which leads to domination and exploitation. Nowhere is this more evident than in urban education.
Chapter 5: The Pre-College Experience of Urban Scholars

Unmasking the Organizational Structure of Privilege

To better understand the sources of educational inequities, it is critical to take a closer look at how urban students interact with and are shaped by the contextual and social environments of their educational experience. Around the nation, schools are supposedly places that positively shape the mind and social and cultural experiences of youth. For students attending schools in urban areas a different type of story unfolds. In the current study, their narratives suggest that urban schools provide a contradictory set of skills and resources which binds them even more closely to the urban system of class and racial inequality they are attempting to escape.

In *Too Much Schooling, Too Little Education*, Shujaa (1994) differentiates between schooling and education by characterizing schooling as the “process intended to perpetuate and maintain the societies existing power relations and the institutional structures that support those arrangement” (p. 15). Although societies have a systematic means educating its members, so they develop and maintain participatory citizenship throughout their lifespan, Shujaa (1994) suggests that when there is a multicultural mix in society, the dominant culture decides which influential norms, values and skills to transmit in schools. In comparison, Shujaa (1994) defines education as the “process of transmitting from one generation to the next, knowledge of the values, aesthetics, spiritual beliefs, and all things that give a particular culture orientation its uniqueness” (p. 15). In the narratives that follow students describe their educational experiences in line with Shujaa’s (1994) definition of both education and schooling. Their narratives
illustrate the dual nature of education experienced by those who attended both suburban and urban schools. It highlights educational inequality and exclusion, which closely aligns with geographical location, class and race. Finally, it draws attention to urban educational practices that subject students to the ascribed values of a more powerful dominant group, which proves harmful when students transition from urban secondary institutions to a rural PWI. In a similar manner, Watkins, (2001b) explores similar conflicts, contradictions and contestations of Black education through his work *The White Architects of Black Education*. Unfortunately, instead of students becoming the architects of their own education, they are constantly experiencing education reform due to systemic and restrictive educational structures that have been passed down to them.

Looking to education as an avenue for upward social mobility, as a way out of the urban context, Stephanie explained why taking advantage of educational opportunities is critical.

The whole goal of the urban area is to get out...We can make it out and when we make it out, we have to come back and help. If we don’t who is? Obviously nobody is really worried about the urban area because it’s a lost cause... It’s too much trouble to talk to an 18 year old male whose father was a drug dealer, his cousin was a drug dealer and his older brothers are drug dealers. So it makes him feel like what else am I supposed to do? ” (Stephanie, personal communication, May 6, 2011.

According to Stephanie, education is a communal concept that requires giving back to the community. For Stephanie, the importance of education supports Anderson’s (1988) claim that the educational movement for Blacks was initially rooted within their communal values, which suggests there was a mutual sharing of knowledge and ideas and consciousness raising as a means of acquiring and transferring these skills. Although
Stephanie and other research participants view education as communal, and as a means for upward social mobility, narratives indicate otherwise - that urban youth are excluded from the educational opportunities experienced by their suburban counterparts. In fact, the researcher argues that urban education is a target of continual educational reform since a key function of the dominant culture is to sustain itself by shaping the educational experiences of those in specific geographical locales (i.e. urban).

Ryan (2006) posits that scholars have utilized the concept of exclusion to better understand marginalization and social justice in schools and communities. For example, curriculum tracking demonstrates the principle of exclusion and the rights of possession, use disposition of a more liberal curriculum (Harris, 1995). In the narratives that follow, exclusion is used to delineate how the process of educational attainment differs across suburban and urban schools. Since most urban Blacks attend apartheid schools (Kozol, 2006; Rury, 2005) and their White counterparts attend suburban schools, the differences in the overall educational experiences yield different levels of achievement when variables like funding, curriculum tracking and geographical location are considered.

To understand the complexity of educational experiences, Green (1999) examined exclusion through a student’s ability level, tracking and placement, which involves the “division of students of similar age and educational level into groups that are to receive instruction according to different curricula” (Green, 1999, p. 231). This suggests that students are not merely excluded due to perceived notions about their ability levels, but they are excluded based upon socioeconomic class, gender, race and geographical location (Bowen et. al., 2005; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995;
Pulido, 2000; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Spring, 2007; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003). By examining exclusion through this multidimensional approach, it allows for an examination of structural versus individual processes which create inequalities that further restrict and prevent upward social mobility of the poor, marginalized and oppressed. Specific to urban educational practices, this framework of exclusion simultaneously (1) exposes the dual nature of education and the exclusion of Blacks from acquiring intellectual property (Harris, 1995) and access to a more rigorous curriculum and it (2) exposes the organizational structure of privilege for those outside of this structure. An examination of these factors is critical in understanding the level of preparation urban students receive prior to matriculating through a rural PWI, which is discussed later.

Of course, the learning process requires students to draw upon prior skills and opportunities to learn at different levels (Kuh et al., 2006), but for Blacks who attended Ohio typology schools in cluster #5 (i.e. urban - low median income, high poverty) and #6 (i.e. major urban – very high poverty), with lower per pupil funding (Baker, 2007; DeRolph, 1997) and are segregated based upon geographical location and class - these variables tend to have a long lasting effect on postsecondary educational experiences. Before examining the social and academic experiences of research participants at the postsecondary level, a comparison of the educational experiences between urban and suburban schools is warranted to illustrate the different educational trajectories urban students experience prior to enrolling in OU. In fact, a body of literature is committed to outlining distinct differences in the educational experiences of urban youth and their
suburban counterparts (Reardon & Yun, 2001; Rury, 1988; Rury, 2005; Rury & Mirel, 1997; Rury & Saatcioglu, 2011; Ryan, 2006; Tyack, 1974). According to Rury and Saatcioglu (2011),

The historical organization of suburban school districts, distinct from their urban counterparts, permitted exclusion of children without requisite social and economic resources, creating the conditions for educational inequality across community lines (p. 309).

Angel, who was salutatorian of her high school and graduated college with a 2.66, described the difference in the level of preparation she received at the secondary level. Moreover, her narrative highlights the burden she carries of lessening the psychological stress and academic failures of urban education.

Sometimes in [university] class they would have conversation that I couldn’t necessarily get into because I couldn’t relate. Sometimes they would talk about their high schools, the books they read in high school, the latest cars they’re driving or how their mom or dad is cutting them a check. I can’t relate to that. A lot of us came from similar [urban] high schools and so we were able to talk about things that we thought we should have known, but we’re just now learning now so we were able to talk about those things and um a lot of times it was just like, I’m just so happy that I got this scholarship cause I don’t know how I would be able to make it (Angel, personal communication, May 5, 2011).

According to Angel, the transition from secondary to postsecondary education was “different” since “they didn’t prepare us on what was going to happen on campus.” Resultantly, the slippages of one environment (i.e. urban, secondary) affected the other (i.e. rural, postsecondary). Even though Angel graduated from high school with honors, the level of academic preparation to compete at the postsecondary level apparently left her feeling unprepared for college entry. This data not only points to the educational disparities horizontally between urban and suburban education, but it draws attention to the vertical disparity between secondary and postsecondary requirements required for
students to be successful. The lack of academic preparation at the secondary level leaves students, like Angel, at an impasse for understanding what is required of them at the next level of postsecondary education and it leaves student struggling academically.

Although scholars suggest that student underachievement is linked to the home and school environment (Rogalsky, 2009), which tends not to foster educational and economic success, a counter argument suggests looking past the individual processes towards the structural processes which contribute to these outcomes, further contextualizing the educational experience (Clotfelter, 2001; Perry, 2003; Perry, Steele, Hilliard, 2003; Rumberger, 2007; Wiggan, 2007). Given the multiplicity of variables which confound urban schools, such as geographical location, racial and cultural barriers, per pupil expenditures and school typologies, it is evident that systemic exclusion of Blacks from educational opportunities poses a significant break between secondary and postsecondary educational expectations. Christopher, who attended Early College High School District, described the structural barriers of curriculum tracking.

I attended a predominantly Black alternative high school, which was a college prep school. Wednesday’s were set aside for internships. If you don’t find your own internship they would help set you up with one. It was a really poor choice on my part since I ended up doing career center - which was basically for people who don’t plan on going to college. It’s where you go for half a day and learn a trade. I really wish I would have known more in detail about high school students taking college classes. I messed that up so I also thought about joining the Army as a way to pay for college, but when I got the scholarship I didn’t need to explore that avenue anymore (Christopher, personal communication, May 2, 2011).

Although Christopher attended a college prep secondary school, he experienced curriculum tracking through vocational training - forgoing the college preparatory route. This is troublesome since the emphasis of postsecondary education is increasingly on
academics and scholarship. At the time of the interview Christopher had a GPA of 2.9 and was classified as a 5th year senior. Instead of Christopher questioning the curriculum, which could have addressed the different postsecondary opportunities which were available, he blamed himself for making poor choices rather than attributing the exclusionary educational practices to inequitable structural and institutional practices. Furthermore, it seemed that the goal of student achievement for the Early College Preparatory School District did not create a sequence of linked coursework between secondary and postsecondary, which would foster student success. Although Jasmine attended the Early College Preparatory School District, she had a much different educational experience. As a first generation college student, she discovered more about college opportunities through advanced placement (AP) coursework, designed to prepare students for postsecondary school entrance.

I didn’t start planning for college until my junior year of high school. At our school I was invited to be in AP courses. When you enter those programs they emphasize college, which was something they always spoke about because you wouldn’t be taking AP classes if they didn’t see that you have potential. One difference I noticed between the curriculums is that in the AP courses more emphasis is placed on college (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011).

Although Jasmine gained access to a curriculum that was designed to foster student success on the postsecondary level, learning about these opportunities during her junior year, is almost too late to be exposed to the academic demands of college level work. The Early College Preparatory School District appears to have prepared Christopher and Jasmine in a different manner for postsecondary success. In fact, a comparative analysis of data indicates that the alignment of academic standards and support by the “early college” rhetoric did not strengthen student transition from high
school to college. This is evident through Aqbar’s secondary educational experience even though he had the advantage of being enrolled in a gifted and talented program since the 1st grade. Upon enrolling in the university, he lost his scholarship due to his inability to maintain academic requirements. During the time of the interview he maintained a 2.5 GPA.

I attended a predominately Black High School and I’ve been in the gifted and talented program since I was in the 1st grade. Everybody in the neighborhood knew I was always the smart one. They knew I didn’t go to the neighborhood schools…I had good grades coming out of high school, but I still wasn’t given the benefit of the doubt. Even with good grades somebody always tried to find a negative side to it. They would say, “you only have good grades because you attended the Urban Preparatory Academy, but you didn’t learn anything in there anyway” (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011).

Aqbar’s narrative suggests that having access to a rigorous curriculum in an urban school still does not guarantee adequate college readiness skills. In fact, the more advance curriculum in urban schools (i.e. advanced placement, gifted and talented) masks within district variations. Such programs are designed to prepare high school students to meet the academic challenges posed at the postsecondary levels, allowing urban students to engage in postsecondary work while still enrolled in high school. However, while urban schools make provisions for educational concerns (e.g. culture, class) they are still confronted with the issue of maintaining a quality curriculum and preparing pathways for student success at the postsecondary level. These disparities are alarming since low-income, first-generation students often accrue greater benefits from an early introduction to postsecondary work, which acculturates them to institutional culture (St. John, 2003; Swail & Perna, 2002; Tebbs & Turner, 2006). Furthermore, this highlights the failure of the educational system to adequately prepare students for postsecondary work. The
variations of curricula found between urban schools perpetuate student under achievement and sadly, it is connected to students’ future success in college.

DuBois (as cited in Butchart, 1988) claims that education for oppressed groups was “always and everywhere political” (Butchart, 1988, p. 333). In support of this argument, Watkins (2001a, 2001b) suggest that Black education is full of historically, politically and socially constructed ideas which are strongly influenced by hegemonic social relationships, labor market economics, class stratification and racial divisions. Specific to schools located in Ohio, a CRT analysis would suggest that school’s located outside of Ohio school typology cluster #5 and #6 will only advocate on behalf of students in Ohio school typology cluster #5 and #6 if their own self-interest are better served (Delgado, 1995; Bell, 1980). In the context of educational inequities in schools across Ohio, this means Whites who have the ability to enact social, political and economic change on behalf of urban schools seldom do so without first identifying the personal costs and gains associated with their actions (Bell, 1980). According to Massey and Denton (1993), practices of exclusion reinforce the social order and racial hierarchies.

To the extent that white prejudice and discrimination restrict the residential mobility of blacks and confine them to areas with poor schools, low home value, inferior services, high crime, and low educational aspirations, segregation undermines their social and economic well being. The persistence of racial segregation makes it difficult for aspiring black families to escape the concentrated poverty of the ghetto and puts them at a distinct disadvantage in the larger competition for education, jobs, wealth, and power (Massey & Denton, 1993, p. 151)

Since the aforementioned narratives of students attending urban schools highlight the disparities of educational practices (i.e. curriculum tracking, per pupil expenditures)
in specific urban geographical locales, a closer look at curriculum tracking suggests that race is a factor in why these disparities exist (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Massey & Denton, 1993). According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), “race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States” (p. 48). To analyze the dual nature of exclusion through curriculum tracking and per pupil expenditures, the social construction of race highlights the inequality and disparities within urban educational spaces and places. Despite the color-blind tendency in the U.S., Ohio school typologies provide insight into the informal aspects of White privilege and the everyday cognates of a more general White structural advantage (Alba & Logan, 1993; Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Clotfelter, 2001; Fairlie & Resch, 2002; Gillborn, 2005; Harris, 1995; Ledwith & Clark, 2007; Pulido, 2000; Wallenstein, 2008; Zhang, 2008). The construction of social, economic and cultural territories and geographical boundaries become very real when formal [educational] policies police these boundaries and further create structural barriers that restrict those within these territories from crossing the borders. Furthermore, this research is interested in those who attempt to cross cultural borders, not with those who police them.

Reframing the Colonial Gaze of Urban Space and Place

Geographical questions of space and place are critical to the understanding of any modern culture and society (Kaplan et. al., 2009). This concept is increasingly being recognized across a range of academic fields and is marked by a plethora of published works from various disciplines including cultural geography, CRT, postcolonial studies, urban history, urban education and geography itself (Ledwith & Clark, 2007; Pulido,
In this body of work, researchers and scholars examine the interstitial spaces and places between processes, practices, politics and the social divisions associated with them. In an attempt to further understand the complexities of how urban spaces and places are constructed and the impact it has on the social identity and educational experiences of urban youth, this section will juxtapose the reproduction of these spaces and challenge the reader to reframe their gaze of urban space and place. According to Bhabha (1994), the metaphorical analysis of the [colonial] gaze represents a paradigm of power, privilege and dominance for the viewer. By refocusing the gaze, it is the intent of the researcher to make visible the imaginary sociological boundaries of urban space and place, which highlights distinct lines between the subject and the object. As Mills (1959, 1997) have argued, postcolonialism is marked by attempts to expose and challenge western imperial practices of mapping and classification through the colonial gaze. It is here that the researcher examined texts, signs, behaviors, perceptions and the sociological imagination connected with urban space and place.

While few participants have been able to articulate the interconnectedness of their urban social, cultural and educational experiences to larger societal institutions and infrastructures, Christopher was able to fluently connect the two worlds, and how it has impacted him as an urban Black male.

They [media] rarely show young Black men in a position of power. Black people are always in subservient roles or in roles that are not intellectuals….It’s all sensationalism of how people view Black people and Black culture… Parts of Black culture were born out of slavery, Jim Crow and oppression. Many Blacks hold strong to those things, but because of the circumstances surrounding their inception sometimes I want to distance myself from those customs and Black
traditions pre-1964… Everybody has their own set of ideas, but I don’t think I fit into that box (Christopher, personal communication, May 2, 2011).

In Christopher’s description of the public image of Black males, he alludes to the racial and gendered archetypes of the Black male. Although the cultural plight of Black male imagery is widely known, Christopher recognizes the media’s role in constructing this imagery that threatens the Black body politic. Resultantly, he chooses to distance himself and not to align with the cultural practices undergirding racialized urban areas.

In *The Racial Contract*, Mills (1997) offers a fuller explication of the racialized nature of society and the intrinsic relationship between the body, racism and colonialism. Although difficult to separate, Mills (1997) posits that the institutionalization of race, racism and space appeals to the imagination of power. He further explained, “You are what you are in part because you originate from a certain kind of space, and that space has those properties in part because it is inhabited by creatures like yourself” (Mills, 1997, p. 42). For the urban racialized space these means a fluid relationship of sorts, is developed where the space shapes the person and the person shapes the space. Aqbar, who lived, worked and attended school in an urban neighborhood explained the symbiotic relationship between him and the urban environment he resided in.

I am a product of my environment and I say that in a nontraditional sense because a lot of people would say, “You come from the hood or the inner city and everybody from here gone end up going to jail or sell drugs.” When I say that I’m a product of my environment I mean I focused early enough so that I could focus on my education. Everybody around me, including my family and those in the community knew that I made it a priority. My environment did shape me to have some of the goals and aspirations and characteristics that I have today. But I’m not one that’s going to talk bad about the people who are in those situations because I know better. So I’m an advocate for people in those situations (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011).
According to Mills’ (1997) racial contract principle, it is understood that the urban environment occupied by Aqbar and other urban residence (i.e. drug dealers, incarcerated) would be alien to the European and in order to bring clarity concerning the urban space, Europeans must theorize the space and its subpersons as “defective in a way that requires external intervention to be redeemed” (Mills, 1997, p. 42). In this positional power, those outside urban spaces and places would be considered civilized, while those inside urban spaces are savages - with the proof of their conditions being made manifest through the inhabited spaces (e.g. drug dealers, jailed). According to Mills (1997), by creating boundaries, the privileges and advantages of the full White citizen are established while the subordination of the colonized is maintained. Although Mills (1997) differentiates boundaries by noting differences between savages and the civilized, it is the same careful language Aqbar used to describe the urban environment that shaped him. Resultantly, he opted not to talk “bad” about those who allowed urban places to shape their personhood. Analysis of Christopher and Aqbar’s narratives indicate that regardless of the master narrative of the negative Black male archetypes, they are committed to values that differentiate them from other urban Black males in that they formulate different expectations in response to the restrictive urban structures.

Researchers posit that the imaginative process concerning the formation of urban spaces are often used to ascribe meaning to and attempt to explain multiple social problems and phenomena (Massey & Denton, 1993; Mills, 1997; Omi & Winant, 1994; Pulido, 2000; Tyack, 1974). Through Omi and Winant’s (1994) racial formation theory, they declare, “race is a matter of both social structure and cultural representation” (p. 56).
In the discipline of Geography, Tyack (1974), Massey and Denton (1993), Mills (1997) and Pulido (2000) support these claims and determine that all major cities in the U.S. are marked by socially constructed boundaries that divide areas geographically along lines of race, ethnicity and class. Evidence of this statement is supported when participants were asked about their perception of urban. Their responses were embedded with geographical markers such as “east side” (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011), “south side” (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011), “inner city,” (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011) and “city” (Christopher, personal communication, May 2, 2011). Other participants associated urban with synonymous names like “hood,” (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011), “ghetto” (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 3, 2011) and “projects” (Stephanie, personal communication, May 6, 2011). Throughout the interviews participants described urbaness by drawing on examples of cultural behavioral patterns and economic conditions, such as “low-middle class” (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011), “poverty” (Stephanie, personal communication, May 6, 2011), “low income” and “low socioeconomic status” (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011). Finally, responses correlated race to urban using words like “people of color,” “community of minorities” (Eve, personal communication, May 12, 2011) and “not just African American’s but Latinos” (Stephanie, personal communication, May 6, 2011).

To participants, urbanness is associated with culture, race, class and location - which support the arguments of researchers who posit that the confluence of these variables aids in the formation of racialized spaces and behavioral within those spaces
The production and representation of urban space and social behaviors of its residence is central in understanding, contextualizing and adding historical depth to modern day urbanization. In the following section participants illustrate how the intersection of racialized spaces and socioeconomic status impacts their educational experiences. Unfortunately, narratives illustrate that for students who attend urban secondary schools, poverty and space become racialized to their detriment, highlighting that oppression and exclusion is primarily a function of social group association (i.e. urban Black, suburban White).

Geographies of Difference: Suburban Education and Urban Schooling

At a time when students understood the restricted nature of the urban context and made a choice to pursue higher education as a vehicle towards upward social mobility, the system of urban education was noted to have even more barriers that paralleled those actively operating in the urban communal context. Relative to students attending Ohio School Districts classified under typology cluster #5 (i.e. urban - low median income, high poverty) and #6 (i.e. major urban - very high poverty) who experienced curriculum tracking, inequitable funding practices, high teacher-pupil ratios and outdated textbooks - these conditions exacerbate the restrictive nature of the urban context by not fully preparing its residence educationally. As evidenced throughout their narratives, the conjoining affects of space, place, race and class, shape the urban context and creates educational and structural barriers for students being educated in urban areas. Since research participants perceived that their high schools did not prepare them for
postsecondary education, some aspired to leave these areas, in search of better educational opportunities.

Cee Cee, who attended the Urban Preparatory Public School District, migrated from an urban to suburban school in the 9th grade and explained the stark differences between the schools types. The new school Cee Cee attended is assigned to Ohio School District typology cluster #7 (i.e. urban/suburban, very high median income). Unlike Ohio School District typology cluster #5 and #6 where her urban peer attended, this district has a high percentage of college completers and a professional administrative workforce (ODE, 2011).

We [suburban school] were on CNN because it’s 50% Black and 50% White. I’ve never been in a school with so many Caucasian people. I’ve always been in the urban ghetooooroo or in the projects. I’ve always been surrounded by Black people. It was just very different. When I went to school in the projects they [teachers] were worried about their paycheck and were ready to leave. I was used to sitting in the back of the classroom chillin’...Nobody around me was making it. So when I moved to the new [suburban] school that’s when everything changed. I went to school and people were like so what do you think Cee Cee and you need to be in these honors classes. And I’m in these [suburban] classes and they were calling on me. That was the first time I started articulating my thoughts and I was like wow - I am smart and I am not a dumb person! ...I enjoyed going to the basketball games, hockey games and prom and having fun (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 4, 2011).

Cee Cee’s comparison between the urban and suburban schools illustrated she was presented with more opportunities to advance in her curriculum at the suburban school. Her narrative further indicated that urban education is complicated by less instructional time devoted to meeting her educational needs, as well as her peers since nobody around her was “making it.” In the suburban school, she attended a college fair and learned about the Urban Scholars Scholarship program. The positive relationship
between advanced course work and academic achievement appear to correlate with more course offerings outside of the core courses (i.e. hockey) and higher educational expectations from her peers. This speaks to the college going culture of the suburban school milieu, even after Cee Cee’s class and geographical location were accounted for. For instance, as Cee Cee gained access to a rigorous curriculum and acquired information about college opportunities through a college fair held at the suburban school she attended, her initial thoughts were, “We’re poor. We came from the projects. We don’t have no money. My mom didn’t go to college and it ain’t happening” (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 4, 2011). Although class and geographical location were areas of concern for Cee Cee, she also faced the lack of familial support as she sought progressive educational opportunities and aspired to attend college.

They [family] distanced themselves from me. They would make fun of me and make jokes a lot like, “Oh Cee Cee like you’re so proper.” I always got teased for the way I spoke or because I was really light. They called me “white bread.” I’ve always been ostracized. So coming here [Ohio University] it was different, but it was nothing to me because I’ve always been on that outside bracket (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 4, 2011).

During Cee Cee’s transition from an urban to a rural space, in this loss-gain binary Cee Cee is charged with mimicry. As noted by Bhabha (1994), “colonial mimicry is the desire for the reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (p. 86). In Cee Cee’s case, she was accused of suppressing the Black English vernacular common in her urban communal community in exchange for standard American English. In using language ambivalent variations that aligned with standard American English, she was chided by family members who resided in the urban context. Later, the researcher will grapple with Jones and McEwen’s (2000)
concept of multiple dimensions of identity as a way to understand how variables of context, race, gender and class impact the social construction of identity. Similar to Cee Cee, Akeem shared his educational experiences of transitioning from an international elementary school in the 3rd grade, to an Africentric High School in the Early High School District.

The [Africentric] school is from K-12. Most students aren’t there from kindergarten through twelve but I was because my parents transferred me into the school from the third grade and I stayed there until I graduated. It was a public school, but with an alternative curriculum. We learned a lot about African American history and our ancestry. Growing up with that information was empowering. When I look at other textbooks you really don’t see anything about people that look like you. But at the Africentric School I hear about Sunni Ali Ber, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King Jr., Sojourner Truth and Benjamin Banneker. All this was part of the everyday teachings. It gave me a sense of self worth (Akeem, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

Although Cee Cee and Akeem attended different school districts (i.e. urban, suburban) with different curricula (i.e. Eurocentric, Africentric) both curricula were designed to foster their social, political, economic and academic development. The successful implementation of the curricula in both context align with Shujaa’s (1994) concept of education or the transfer of information from one generation to the next, with a particular cultural orientation (e.g. institutional, cultural) (Shujaa, 1994). For Cee Cee and Akeem education, not schooling was responsible for empowerment, agency, positive self concept and emotional well being. Conversely, for their counterparts attending urban schools, they were not provided with the same progressive level of educational opportunities. A comparative analysis of the suburban and urban school context highlight the role of school typology, racial composition and curriculum placement in determining the level of educational achievement for students. These findings also
demonstrate that Black students attending racially isolated urban schools are presented with fewer opportunities to learn through curriculum tracking, and are more likely to be enrolled in lower track courses, which impacts their overall academic achievement and college readiness skills. A CRT analysis would suggest that curricula in urban spaces present students with conformist thinking, a process strategically designed to maintain a racial hierarchical social order and perpetuate existing power relations and institutional structures.

In an effort to better understand the acquisition of college readiness skills, students were asked to reflect on their urban educational experiences. Initially, students lauded about their high school experiences involving popularity, social activities and leadership opportunities; however, when the academic level of preparation for postsecondary education was considered major discrepancies were noted. Stephanie, who attended the Urban Preparatory School District, talked about being a STAR pupil, yet lacked the necessary resources and accommodations to allow her to develop as a STAR pupil. “We [School of the Arts] have a graduation rate of like 96%. We’re kind of like the star pupil of the school district, but we’re still starting off on the wrong foot with these old books and these packed classrooms where the teacher can’t really spend time with you” (Stephanie, personal communication, May 6, 2011). In contrast to Stephanie’s urban educational experience, Reardon and Yun (2001) report that the number of Blacks attending middle class suburban schools, like Cee Cee, has been increasing. However, data illustrates that increasing poverty also accompany students as they migrate (Reardon & Yun, 2001).
Despite the increase in the number of Blacks who migrate to suburban schools, the fact remains that a large majority of Blacks attend apartheid schools (Kozol, 2006) where structural barriers fortify inequitable educational practices. It is within this context (i.e. racial, socio-, economic) that urban education should be understood whereby historical practices mandate particular types of learning for the urban poor.

Despite Brown’s contributions, the legal system shows that the struggle for civil rights in both education and personhood has been a slow pain staking process, entrenched with resistance and contestation (Watkins, 2001a; Watkins, 2001b). This pattern is obvious when you examine the major legal decisions pertaining to race rendered by the U.S. Supreme Court: 1857, *Dred Scott* (Kluger, 1975); 1896, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Kluger, 1975); 1954 *Brown* (Patterson, 2001); and 1978, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (Tierney & Chung, 2002). Furthermore, the slow progression of civil rights through education and personhood illustrate the battles that ensue over geographical boundaries marked by race and class. Regardless of the attempts of the law to mandate better education for all students, the goals of making education equitable have remained largely unmet (Baker, 2007). At hand is the measure of slow incremental change and the nation’s ability and power to enact adequate changes (i.e. law, policy) to address the legacy of racial, economic and social hierarchies and inequities embedded in urban education. Finally, it draws attention to the underlying historical practices that have created and continue to contribute to urban school inequities.

Even though scholars question the legacy and educational change that Brown left (Bell, 1980; Bell, 2004; Carroll, et. al., 2004; Futrell, 2004; Harvey et. al., 2004; O’Brien,
2007; Patterson, 2001) the law plays and continues to play a critical role in establishing policies and practices that support educational reform. For instance, in the area of Affirmative Action (Noguera, 2000; Taylor, 2000; Tierney & Chung, 2002; Yosso et. al., 2004), school funding (DeRolph, 1997; Baker, 2007) and curriculum (Boykin, 2001; Watkins 2001a; Watkins 2001b), the law has redefined what access should look like and how to redistribute resources. In this role the law also validates the limitations of educational reform and the disparity between theory and practice. Noguera (2000) reports that more than school reform, the efforts to transform public education is urgent since education will be the most important civil rights issues of the next century.

Furthermore Noguera (2000) posits that civil rights issues related to education is not attributed to liberal educators being open to change or because politicians and policy makers have been unwavering in their commitment to promote racial equality through education.

In sum, participants described urban neighborhood prints, cultural behaviors and how systems of knowledge are understood in relation to one another, and the role of the media in reifying the urban culture. Tracing the educational experiences of urban youth from secondary to postsecondary institutions illustrated the impact that racialized spaces and places have on societal behaviors and educational practices (i.e. curriculum tracking, per pupil expenditures, developing college readiness). The fact that Urban Scholars were aware of the different educational trajectory they experienced, when compared to their White counterparts, left some in search of better social and educational opportunities. It is here where students discovered the disparity between urban schooling and suburban
educational practices. Mapping these different trajectories highlight the structural variations of educational systems and provides a framework for understanding the college readiness skills of urban students. To fully disrupt the deficit paradigm and juxtapose the role of media and the master narrative in defining urban space and the cultural behaviors embedded in the space a “relational view” of learners within an institutional setting should be adopted Knapp & Associates, 1995, p.3). This relational view helps us understand the dynamics at play (i.e. race, culture, class) in urban areas, the affects it has on urban schools and the students attending them. Rather than defining urban education in a vacuum, from a one dimensional view, the data illustrates the need to reframe the colonial gaze to further understand urban education. It is within this social context of urbanization where urban education should be analyzed.
Chapter 6: Navigating Troubled Waters:  
The Role of Institutional Habitus in Higher Education

The habitus, as the system of dispositions to a certain practice, is an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour, and thus for the regularity of modes of practice, and if practices can be predicted (here, the punishment that follows a certain crime), this is because the effect of the habitus is that agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances (Bourdieu, 1990, p, 77).

In order to understand the navigation process of Urban Scholars at OU, this research draws upon the concept of institutional habitus - a term coined by Bourdieu (1990) to describe the transformation of behavioral norms acquired through the socialization process. Although easily applied to student access, this concept is also applicable to student engagement and persistence. Using narratives from Urban Scholars attending OU, this section examines issues surrounding college choice, engagement and the various forms of habitus used during these processes. How urban students navigate these processes raised the significant question of the roles that institutional habitus played in the matriculation of urban students attending a rural PWI. This is explored in this section by drawing heavily on the work of Bourdieu (1977, 1990). The goal is to present a conceptual understanding of the ways in which the behaviors of Urban Scholars impact their matriculation (i.e. engagement, persistence).

The Ebb and Flow of Urban Habitus in the College Choice Process

Education in the U.S. has always been known to take the form of a social institution (Spring, 2007) while seemingly offering educational equality for all; however, as illustrated in chapter 5, all students do not have equal educational opportunities to a quality education. Narratives of the Urban Scholars indicate that inequitable distribution
of educational outcomes hinge on 3 possible explanations, which are not encouraging for grappling with and understanding educational inequities: (1) inequitable school funding, (2) geographical differences and (3) organizational privilege. What is less clear, however, is once students transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions is whether or not these institutional inequities (i.e. education) persist.

When high school seniors aspire to attend postsecondary institutions, it is a result of simultaneous processes. Applicants apply and enroll in college with the support of family and school personnel, while universities resort to systemic recruitment techniques to enhance its student enrollment (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). For low-income, first generation college Urban Scholars who view college as an important step in escaping urban geographical locales, via college choice and scholarship opportunities, choosing the right university is complex when information becomes difficult to access (e.g. financial access). For this specific cadre of students, choosing colleges was the result of a confluence of familial, community and school need. According to Farmer-Hinton (2008), research in the area of college choice has primarily targeted White, affluent students and the familial support and available resources they receive. Mapped onto urban youth, this study by Farmer-Hinton (2008) fails to consider the social context and how urbanization has limited and all but excluded urban students and their understanding of college access. For research participants in this study, there was a heavy reliance on familial and school networks, people resources and social capital to enhance their upward social mobility (i.e. school counselors, teachers, principals and school affiliates/partnerships) as was the case for suburban students; however, turban schools do not have
the structure to provide this information readily. By examining the dynamic interaction between student behaviors, organizational structures and professional practices, unveiled is a picture of how dominant groups continue to maintain dominant positions and how urban students are left grappling with a combination of behaviors to access to these structures – that is various forms of habitus. In this chapter, the inner workings of the college choice process, variables that influence this process (i.e. direct guidance, encouragement, competitive financial aid package) and gender differences related to college and occupational choice and GPA are explicated. Students discussed the importance of a competitive financial aid package, developing college readiness skills through appropriate secondary curriculum choices, obtaining information about college through school personnel, visiting college campuses through pre-matriculation programs and making the college choice.

Beginning in the 1990s, a vast amount of students who attended college with a financial access need had increased significantly (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2002). This is critical to note since gift aid (i.e. scholarships, grants, work-study programs), according to Swail and Perna (2002), are related to higher student retention rates. When asked about college choice, for the vast majority of research participants money seemed to be an issue from the very beginning.

I applied to thirteen different schools. I got into all thirteen…Clark Atlanta, Spellman, Kentucky State, University of Miami, Florida A & M. These are the ones I can remember off the top of my head…I applied to HBCUs because I felt like I would be more comfortable there and because that’s the kind of environment I grew up in. Then my high school band director, who’s a graduate from OU she brought me here and opened my eyes to what was here and introduced me to some people…The Urban Scholars Scholarship was the deciding factor. Hands down because the historically Black colleges weren’t offering me
the money and I know that without a scholarship I wasn’t going to be able to afford to pay for school…When I got the phone call telling me I got the scholarship, I was ecstatic and I’m like WOW! I’m actually going to be able to go to school and not have to worry about money (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

Angel, a first generation college student admitted that the option to forego college was not an option since she had “always been a straight “A” students.” However, she admitted she had to “do a lot of stuff on my own because my mom and dad really didn’t know.” She further explained

It was a learning experience for all of us. I think my experience has made things a lot easier for my two younger sisters. One’s in college now and the other will be going to college in the fall…My band director and counselor took a really keen interest in me because they saw my potential. She would help me and if she saw thing she thought I should apply for, she would bring them to my attention and we would sit down and talk about it….My guidance counselor tracked me down in one of my classes and told me to come by her office the next day so we could talk about the paperwork (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

Although Angel’s parents lacked the necessary tools to assist her, Angel explained they held high educational expectations about her college planning and college choice. Noeth and Wimberly (2002) posits that first generation college students who are high achieving have a high probability of not discussing the college planning process with their parents since they are less likely to have explicit and detailed information about the college choice process including the process to complete financial aid paperwork. This statement does not hold true for Angel and her family, since the college choice process for her appeared to be communal in nature - a process that was “a learning experience for us all” (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011). Angel confirmed that due to a lack of awareness with the educational systems and resource networks, her parents were limited in their active involvement; however, to bridge this gap, Angel
relied on the guidance of her high school counselor and band director to supply her with adequate resources needed for college exploration, planning and decision making - both who possessed cultural and social capital that Angel nor her family possessed. The college choice process for Angel appeared to be more than just applying and choosing a college. Rather it involved a confluence of variables (i.e. family support, social networking, college recruitment, competitive financial aid package) that were instrumental in making the final choice to attend OU.

Jasmine had a similar experience and explained she found out about the Urban Scholars Scholarship program from her senior counselor, who was adamant that she “sit right here and fill out this application” (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011). Jasmine explained the scholarship was $14,000 and very attractive since other schools only offered loans. According to the General Accounting Office (as cited in Kuh, et al., 2006), loans are associated with higher retention rates for Whites, whereas an increase in grant funding decreases the likelihood of stop outs by Blacks and Hispanics. For urban students attending OU, this indicated that Blacks are cognizant of college cost and competitive financial aid packages in terms of choosing and persisting in college. Although urban students applied to and gained acceptance to difference institutional types (i.e. HBCUs, PWIs), the fact that OU provided more grant aid versus loans to Urban Scholars speaks of their commitment of recognizing economic diversity among students in the college choice process. Furthermore, OU addressed the primary obstacle for these students (i.e. finances), while simultaneously working to augment persistence and time of degree completion.
Both Angel and Jasmine’s narratives call attention to the role of high school guidance counselors in providing guidance to first generation college students and a pressing need for them to communicate the overall importance of college [financial] access. In pragmatic terms, these students were presented with [financial] access to postsecondary education; however, it is obvious the relationship that led to these resources was heavily skewed and initiated by high school counselors. In both instances, the high school guidance counselor approached and initiated the decision making process of students aspiring to attend college. Cee Cee had a similar experience and explained that her counselor played a critical role in her college choice process. She noted that although she did well academically in high school with over a 3.0 GPA, it was always “money, money, money to me” (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 4, 2011). She continued to talk about the college choice process, standardized test and actual college enrollment.

So they [counselors] gave me waivers for my SAT, ACT and college application. They really tried to stick their necks out to help me…I took the ACT, SAT and filled out the application for OU and another college. I got into OU and they immediately sent me the information packet about Urban Scholars. I filled it out and thought, “If I get that, I’m going.” They were just so persistent. It was like OU wanted me there. I knew it had a lot to do with me being a smart person but they don’t have many Black people there. I knew they wanted me there and I wanted to be there. So it was a mutual thing. Although I looked at other schools and started filling out applications those schools were too close to home. OU was just far away but not too far from home and it worked out (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 5, 2011).

Similar to Angel and Jasmine, Cee Cee had the necessary family support from her mother but relied more on the high school counselors for direct guidance with her college plans - which is common among African American, Latino/a and low income students
(Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001). Highlighting the need for college information and its availability through high school guidance counselors does not downplay the need for postsecondary institutions to acknowledge and address additional barriers that often affect the college choice process for urban youth (i.e. basic knowledge of college, financial barriers). According to the data in this study, students who have the least amount of knowledge about the college choice process are more likely to count on high school personnel for guidance (i.e. counselors). Unfortunately, students who need access to college knowledge and direct guidance about college choice are the least likely to obtain this type of information (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Hossler et al., 1989).

According to McDonough (1997), schools with a high population of minorities are more likely to have fewer resources, fewer school counselors and more under qualified teachers from different cultural backgrounds. Within this context, urban Blacks who attend de facto segregated schools receive less support from school personnel. In considering the lack of direct support from family members and constrained resources in urban schools, postsecondary institutions play a critical role in establishing practices that support first generation, low income students in the college choice process. Cee Cee indicated that she was aware that the university “wanted me there and I wanted to be there” (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 4, 2011). Although the two interests’ converged (i.e. financial access, increase enrollment of minority students), it seemingly appeared that OU was equally aware of the financial barriers that impede the college choice process and established educational policies and practices that worked towards minimizing these factors (i.e. financial aid, college knowledge).
In 2002, Noeth and Wimberly interviewed African American and Latino high school seniors about their college planning support system and found that mothers had a strong impact on the aspirations of college students. Researchers have found similar trends regarding support from family as a predictor of educational attainment for students of color (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Wilson & Allen, 1987). A combination of maternal support and direct guidance from school personnel echoes the findings of the aforementioned research studies. Although mothers were mentioned more often as being supportive of their daughters’ college choice, the support of fathers or males was not mentioned at all. This phenomenon is worth mentioning since college enrollment of Black males lags behind most other demographic classifications (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010).

According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education report (2010), the national graduation rate for African American males is 47%. Although seemingly contradictory, this report indicated that neighborhoods, school districts and states are doing “relatively well” (p. 4) in their attempts to raise achievement levels for Black males; however, the vast majority are failing to target and invest in resources that work for Black male students. Data from this report reveal in the 2007/8 cohort, Ohio fell below the national graduation rate for Black males and is ranked among the top ten lowest performing states. In the state of Ohio, according to the Schott Foundation for Public Education report (2010), while Black males are graduating at 41%, their White counterparts are graduating at 78%, a 37% gap. The state by state graduation rates for Black, Non-Hispanic male students (See Figure 3) prove that the states with the smallest
population of Blacks (i.e. Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont) show higher graduation rates for Black male students, while states with a high number of Blacks show significantly lower graduation rates for Black males. Specific to research participants, the estimated 2007/8 graduation rate for Black males in the Early College High School District was 35% and the graduation rate for Black males in the Urban Preparatory School District was 27% (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). Consequently, the three Black males in this study, who managed to achieve high school graduation, spoke more about their own individual abilities during the college choice process than those received in the system. In fact, data from Black males navigating the college choice process in this study indicate that districts are not creating conditions for them to be successful at the postsecondary level.
Conclusive findings of the Schott Foundation for Public Education report (2010) indicate that the American educational system is not beneficial for Black males attending them. For example, out of 48 states, Black males are least likely to complete high school in 33 states (Schott Foundation for Public Education Report, 2010). All things considered, a student’s access to resources for an equitable education should not depend upon the track (i.e. zip code) in which he lives. In the current study, although maternal support was illustrated, parents, or mothers in particular, still lacked knowledge about the college selection process needed for their daughters and sons. As a result, students relied
heavily on the capital made available to them through high school personnel with guidance counselors being the most frequently cited source for disseminating knowledge about college entry exams, application packets and financial aid information. These findings illustrate that although familial support networks assists in prompting students, for the most part urban Blacks do not initiate a self-directed college search process. Of significance in this study is confirmation that supportive school counselors begin the college choice process for urban Blacks, which is supportive of McDonough’s (1997) research that suggest school guidance counselors are effective agents in influencing the college choice process, while parental educational experiences are limited in scope, particularly for urban parents who may or may not have attended college themselves.

Researchers have identified persistent differences in the college experiences of African American women and men (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002). In this study, gender differences were noted at both the secondary and postsecondary levels during the college choice process. These differences included when the process was initiated, who informed students about the college choice process, where students discovered information about the process and how students decided to fund their educational opportunities. Even though participants gathered information about the college choice process at various times, women tended to learn of college choice opportunities through curriculum placement (i.e. advanced placement). They began the college process much earlier and applied to more colleges when compared to their Black male counterparts. Abigail, who is not a first generation college student, noted how her college choice process was
influenced early by family, secondary school affiliates from the Urban Preparatory School district and a competitive scholarship offer from the university.

Once I got to middle school I really started to think about college. That’s when we started to get introduced to a lot of careers. You always have career days in elementary school, but you never really think about it [college]. In middle school we always had people come in and talk about their different careers. I was part of a [selective] program called Grandville Academy where we would meet once a week or once every two weeks and they would have people come in from FOX 8 news, or channel 5 news…They would take us on field trips meeting different people of different backgrounds to see where our heads were. We would take annual trips. One year we went to New Jersey, then Connecticut, then Baltimore. This really helped as far as knowing that college was what I wanted to do. I would say that really helped put a stamp on it…This program is part of the Urban Preparatory School District and it goes from the 7th to the 12th grade…Applying to OU was not on my list. I applied to Clark Atlanta, Fisk, Tennessee State, Eastern Michigan, University of Tennessee, Grambling. I was set to go to Clark Atlanta then I got that phone call from OU saying I was nominated for the Urban Scholars award…I filled out the application, interviewed a couple of weeks later and the same week I graduated I got word I was accepted for the scholarship …Once I got the word that I got the scholarship, it was a no brainer (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011).

An analysis of Abigail’s narrative indicated that expectations for degree attainment and plans to attend college were dependent upon early preparations through secondary institutions. This suggested that students who were identified at an early age as having high scholastic achievement in urban school districts received a good deal of direct guidance and support from high school personnel and community affiliates. For Abigail, Grandville Academy was an opportunity to move her beyond the boundaries of the urban classroom into more experiential learning, which gave concrete meaning in shaping the college choice process. Unlike Abigail who was introduced to the college going culture, at an early age, Aqbar learned of opportunities much later.

It’s weird because it wasn’t like I was a bad student. I thought I was a great student who always took an interest in my education. I didn’t try as hard as I
could have but I always took an interest in my grades. When I graduated I had somewhere around a 3.9 GPA. But because college isn’t in our culture back home I really didn’t know about college and I didn’t think about going until maybe my junior year. My principal is probably the 1st one who played an instrumental role in getting all of us to go to school…she was African American I didn’t want to go to OU. I took my ACT and SAT during my junior year and I only actually applied to Eastern Michigan, OU and the University of Miami in Florida. I was accepted into Eastern Michigan and OU. I attended OU because I was awarded the most money (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011).

Aqbar, a first generation college student, admitted that the college experience was not part of his cultural or familial background. It seemingly appeared as if the college going culture was not part of the urban high school he attended, hence the late introduction of college at such a late phase during his secondary experience. Since Aqbar was part of a culture where college going aspirations were not widespread, beginning the college choice process later, left him with a small window period to select and apply to colleges.

A second gender difference involved who informed students about the college choice process. For females, the college choice process was initiated through the curriculum (i.e. advanced placement course), information was presented much earlier and it was initiated by classroom teachers and high school guidance counselors. For males, this picture appeared very different. Christopher, who initially participated in the vocational curriculum track during high school because he had no aspirations of attending college, illustrate the short time frame in which he applied for and was accepted into the university.

My mom went to college. She got her Bachelors and then her Masters from Cornell…I didn’t consider attending any other school besides OU. Recruiters came to my school my senior year and they gave us free applications. They waived the application fee. I applied and was accepted to OU before the deadline.
I received the scholarship before the deadlines for any other school so I didn’t bother applying anywhere else. I also thought about joining the Army instead of college and my mom was not pleased about that. I would go to the Army four years and then go to college after that as a way to pay for college. When I got the scholarship, I really didn’t need to explore that avenue any further (Christopher, personal communication, May 2, 2011).

Even though Christopher attended a college preparatory school, ironically he “ended up doing career center for people who don’t plan on going on to college” (Christopher, personal communication, May 2, 2011). When he discovered about more financial access, through the Urban Scholars Scholarship program, he reconsidered his career choice and enrolled in college. As noted in the review of literature in chapter 2, becoming part of the Armed Forces was a historical way that men and women gained access to college (Hagedorn & Tierney, 2002). Although the GI Bill provided financial access and educational opportunities for men and women who served the Country, Black veterans accounted for only a small percentage of the total GI enrollments (Thelin, 2004). In a similar manner, the Urban Scholars Scholarship program served the same purpose as the GI Bill - that is minimizing financial barrier to college access. Resultantly, Christopher preferred the scholarship versus the military to fund his postsecondary education.

Even though Christopher attended an alternative high school, where he participated in a vocational educational track, there was no mention of guidance counselors who provided direct support during the college choice process. According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education report (2010), as a Black male, Christopher had a 35% chance of graduating from the Early College High School District in 2007/8,
which speaks to the low expectations of school personnel concerning Black male achievement.

When Akeem was questioned about the time frame he began thinking about college he explained, “I started paying attention to it in middle school” (Akeem, personal communication, May 12, 2011). While attending an Africentric school, he attributed the initiation of the college choice process to his parents and classroom teachers.

It’s kind of a combination between my parents and my teachers because my mom and dad would always talk about going to college. It wasn’t nothing specific but the teachers encouraged it, especially with students who were doing well in the classroom. They made sure we would go to the gifted and talented programs where they would talk to us about higher education. So they really pushed us into looking into it (Akeem, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

Although Akeem received no direct guidance from his parents and teachers, he did receive encouragement and mentoring that supported his aspirations of attending college. He further explained that he applied to in state and out-of-state colleges and universities (i.e. Ohio State, Otterbein, Morehouse, Kentucky State, Rochester Institute of Technology). He was accepted into Morehouse but stated “the tuition was very expensive. It was almost like $27,000 a year, but it was all loans” (Akeem, personal communication, May 12, 2011). Not wanting to be in debt coming out of college Akeem opted to accept the Urban Scholars Scholarship and attend OU, which stresses the importance of choice.

All Black males in this study - Christopher, Aqbar and Akeem - received no direct guidance from school personnel (i.e. recruiters, principals, or teachers) during their secondary college choice process, although they were supported in their overall college going aspirations. Interestingly, all 3 had access to a rigorous curriculum, similar to their
Black female counterparts who learned about college choice through the curriculum, yet they received little direct guidance from school personnel. For Christopher and Aqbar, knowledge about college was initiated much later and outside of the academic classroom (i.e. administration/ principal, recruiter). Although male and female participants applied to both HBCUs and PWIs, financial access and a competitive scholarship package remained the top reason for choosing to attend OU. Data analysis suggested that for students who applied to HBCUs, more loans, as opposed to gift aid (i.e. grants and scholarships) was offered. Due to the unmet financial needs of low-income, full time undergraduate students, many chose a rural PWI over HBCUs. This trend indicated that urban students were willing to accept gift aid and persevere through challenges associated with Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995) at a PWI, rather than become part of a heterogeneous racial/ ethnic population (i.e. HBCU) and incur massive financial debt. In this context, socioeconomic factors, in addition to other variables is believed to influence female and males dispositions in the college choice process (i.e. familial support, direct guidance from school personnel, college recruitment personnel, activities beyond the classroom and community affiliates). Chase, a campus leader commented on the importance of a competitive financial aid package for urban students who attend the university.

Financial support is so critical to students from urban centers across our state and across our country because more often than not, students from cities don’t have the financial means to afford a college education. If they’ve done well academically, we think that these students are deserving of financial support. Without that financial support, many of these students simply would not be able to get a college education - whether it’s an Urban Scholar with an urban scholarship, whether it’s a Pell grant, whether it’s an Ohio College Opportunity Grant. Whatever it is, without grants and scholarships, many minority students in
our urban centers could not come to college because they would not be able to afford to pay for that college education and their parents wouldn’t. So it’s vital. It’s critical. That was the other reason for creating the program, to try to open the door as it had been open for me and others before me. This was a way to open the door to opportunity for students of color (Chase, personal communication, July 19, 2011).

As part of the institutional leadership, Chase understood that college access encompassed more than just attending the university. For urban students, this translates into financial access, which, according to Tebbs & Turner (2006), is the most significant barrier for middle and low income families aspiring to attend college. By minimizing financial barriers to postsecondary educational opportunities, the college aspirations for urban students and their families became a reality. Yet and still, the data indicated that Black urban males tend to look to a variety of sources to fund their college education, apart from scholarships. For instance, Christopher considered joining the military (i.e. Army) to pay for college since he understood the options for gaining tuition money was limited. Taking a calculated risk, Aqbar even considered turning to illegal means to finance his college education.

A lot of the people are using it [selling drugs] as a stepping stone. I know a couple of people who actually sold drugs, who graduated high school and started selling drugs. He took a student loan out and used the money to buy drugs. He sold all of the drugs and paid the student loan off. He used the rest of the money to start his own business. I mean it’s good money… I know a lot of people who sold drugs a little bit but a lot of them are in school or in a trade program or vocational program trying to get something they can really build on and go far like the rest of us. They just took a different route to it…I’ve even considered taking a different route. When you’re surrounded by it so much it’s hard not to, especially when you’re struggling [financially]. I’ve been in the gifted and talented program since I was in the first grade, and I grew up in a house where it was six kids (Aqbar, personal communication, May 29, 2011).
Aqbar’s narrative speaks to the importance of gift aid and financial access for urban students and their families who support their aspirations to attend college.

Once participants began matriculating through the university, data analysis further unearthed gender differences related to career choice. Females majored in Family Studies, Education, Sociology/ Criminology, Theatre, English Pre-Law and Biology/ PreMed, whereas men majored in Sociology/ Criminology, International Marketing/ Japanese and Media Arts and Science. For the most part these career choices align with traditionally gendered roles; however, for females this choice was not a linear process. Females declared majors only as a result of being pushed out of their first occupational choices, being discouraged by university faculty and improper advising. In the context of these educational practices, Black females were left with a very narrow range of stereotypical feminine occupations (e.g. social, artistic and conventional type occupations).

Results from this study suggest that although males had higher career aspirations than their female counterparts, they presented with lower GPAs. For instance, male GPAs ranged from 2.5 to 2.9 and females ranged from 2.6 to 3.6. One out of 3 male participants, or 33%, had difficulty maintaining the GPA for the scholarship requirement.

It was hectic because when I originally lost it [scholarship], I lost it because my GPA. You need a 2.5 and I had a 2.47… I came back my sophomore year without the scholarship. I took out loans. When I came back to the university during fall quarter of my sophomore year I still owed the university $9,000. I didn’t know where $9,000 was coming from at that time. It wasn’t until a week after school started that my last loan was approved and I had enough money to cover everything for the year. My GPA was basically titter tottering right around 2.5 all the time without ever surpassing it. I did that my entire sophomore year. Then I did bad in so many classes that by the start of my junior year I didn’t have the credit hours to re-gain it. I actually got the GPA requirement back my junior year, but didn’t have the credit hours to
regain the scholarship. .. It was hectic (Aqbar, personal communication, May 29, 2011).

Aqbar had access to the secondary gifted and talented curriculum in the Urban Preparatory School District where he graduated with approximately a 3.9 GPA; yet he experienced difficulty with maintaining university scholarship requirements from his initial enrollment through his junior year. At the time of the research study he was classified as a 5th year senior. For Aqbar, over 60% (or 3 of 5 years) of his college matriculation was spent struggling to maintain the academic scholarship requirement of a 2.5 GPA. Despite the fact that Aqbar attended a gifted and talented leadership academy, also known as the gifted campus, it appeared as if his achievement was still restricted in the urban school context. Similar to AP courses, this curriculum is structured to afford students the occasion to experience college-level course work while still enrolled in high school (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000); however, for Aqbar, this curriculum did not prove rigorous enough to sustain his ability to keep the Urban Scholars Scholarship during his sophomore and junior year. This drives home the importance of a rigorous curriculum and the development of college readiness skills at the postsecondary level for urban students. Of 7 female scholarship recipients, 28% (2/7) had difficulty maintaining the scholarship requirements.

It was a messed up position because I’ve been practically offered this full ride scholarship and because my GPA was so low it was hard to get it back up…I ended up losing my scholarship…Even though it was for one quarter that was three months without a scholarship I didn’t have. That was a quarter I didn’t get an overage. That was a quarter I had to take out a loan. Having to go through all of that and to see that I was on the verge of almost not coming back because I wondered how am I going to get this money to pay for this one quarter? At that point, after losing it I felt like this can’t happen again, because my parents don’t have it. I don’t have it. I’m not about
to take out this loan when I’ve been giving this money (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011).

These findings are surprising, given that college GPAs for Black females were higher when compared to their Black male counterparts. When you consider the K-16 educational pipeline, career choice and GPAs, females received more direct guidance in the college choice process, received information much earlier from school personnel through course placement and applied to more postsecondary schools. Upon their matriculation, females maintained higher GPAs when compared to their male counterparts; they experienced curriculum tracking and were eventually forced to select careers that aligned with traditional gendered and racialized roles, due to being pushed out of initial career choices. Conversely, males received less direct guidance from school personnel, received information concerning the college choice process much later from sources outside of the classroom and although they selected majors that aligned with male gendered roles, they present with lower GPAs than their female counterparts.

What seems to be less clear is the selective nature of secondary and postsecondary faculty/staff in assisting urban students during the college choice and matriculation processes. According to McDonough (1997), this is worth exploring since individual college opportunity is linked to K-12 educational opportunities. For urban students who attended schools in Ohio School District typology cluster #5 (low median income, high poverty) and #6 (major urban - very high poverty, there is the potential of having limited access to rigorous coursework, which contributes to the educational disparities noted in college choice preparation, college readiness skills, knowledge and in understanding institutional culture. These gender differences assists our understanding of the relative
influence and affects that race, culture, class and geographical location had on urban students during the college choice process. When asked which factors was the most important influence, 100% of students cited that a competitive financial aid package took precedence over social context. As illustrated throughout the data, a confluence of factors influenced academic performance/achievement and occupational goals. Despite difficulties during the college choice process, students were still able to gain access to institutional structures by drawing upon various forms of capital.

**Bourdieu’s Conception of Habitus: Social and Cultural Reproduction**

Couched in the context of social reproduction, the seminal work of Bourdieu (1977, 1990) places extreme emphasize on ways that schools reproduce social divisions based on wealth, privilege and power. By exploring *habitus*, he sought to expose the relationship between social and cultural reproduction. According to Bourdieu (1990), the dispositions that students embody and transport with them to institutions are significant since rewards and penalties are contingent upon the type of behaviors displayed.

Through the process of socialization *habitus* (behaviors) refers to the norms and practices of particular social classes of people that are acquired through daily interactions and experiences (e.g. family interactions, educational experiences). These experiences impact and modify behaviors so much so that they are in a constant state of flux depending upon contextual factors (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). In the constant evolution of social behaviors for urban students, change can be slow since these behaviors are informally taught in educational or social institutions - a concept difficult to grasp for a cadre of students who accrue greater benefits from direct guidance and
communal support. Because these skills are informally taught, they can become difficult to detect; however, researchers in the field of sociology have been successful in illustrating how best to make visible the invisible aspects of habitus in educational settings (Lin, 2000; Steele, 1997; Steele, 1999; Steele, 2003; Tatum, 1997). Although there is a growing body of knowledge related to habitus and its relationship to education, there seems to be a burgeoning interest in the function of habitus through various forms of capital.

Capital, as noted by Bourdieu (1977) presents itself in 3 forms. **Economic capital** is transferable into money and rights associated with property. **Cultural capital** is changeable into financial/economic capital, which is manifested materially as experience and/or educational credentials. According to Bourdieu (1977), this type property is transferred to the children of middle and upper class families - which secures and maintains privilege and class status for future generations. Finally, **social capital** is characterized by social connections, which are converted into economic/financial capital and manifests itself in the form of mobility (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu (1977) posits that understanding the utility of cultural capital lends itself to a deeper understanding of unequal scholastic achievement of students coming from different social classes.

The utility of Bourdieu’s (1977) framework illustrates how a society that is hierarchical in nature reproduces itself. Understanding this reproduction is critical in understanding why academic and social outcomes for people of color are lower when compared to Whites. In this reproduction, Lin (2000), posits that networks of homogeneity reinforces inequality and limit the transmission of information and
resources that are most common in heterogeneous networks. As noted throughout the
data, racialized urban spaces, characterized by social and economic isolation, proved
debilitating for urban youth who aspired to attend college and learn more about the
college choice process. Students of color are similar to their White counterparts
regarding college aspirations, but the disparity lies in their ability to plan (McDonough,
1997), especially when college knowledge is not presented for urban youth to make a
choice. Specific to students in this study, who lacked the economic capital to gain access
to OU, prior to securing the Urban Scholars Scholarship, analysis of data showed that
potential capital had not been tapped into due to related structural barriers in the
educational system - that is, who received college knowledge, when and how this
information was distributed.

According to Franklin and Savage (2004), when African Americans join together
to create capital, this leads to additional resources whereby they are able to meet critical
social, political and economic needs in their respective communities. Specifically,
Randolph (2004) suggest that for Blacks, cultural capital grew out of a sense of
responsibility that was the backbone of the social and economic development, served as
an avenue for racial social uplift. By operating in racially and spatially isolated urban
communities, research participants were restricted in their quest for capital (i.e.
intellectual) in the context of urban space and place. This is critical to note since data
indicated that planning for and gaining access to postsecondary institutions required a
combination of familial support, direct guidance from secondary and postsecondary
personnel and a competitive scholarship packet. This scenario further represents the
reliance that urban students have upon institutional structures and professional educational practices by those occupying roles within these institutions. Hence, the transfer or pooling of knowledge related to college is critical in assisting urban students and their families in filling informational gaps so they are able to readily identify educational practices, policies, people resources and institutional structures that support them during the college choice and matriculation processes. By ensuring that accurate and timely information is disseminated about the college choice and matriculation processes, urban students become vessels for holding various forms of capital (i.e. navigational, intellectual, social, cultural), passing the capital down intergenerationally and eventually establishing a college going culture - unlike that found in the urban school district previously attended by Urban Scholars.

_Bridging the Divide: Accruing and Transferring Capital through College Outreach Programs_

In 2004…the Urban Scholars Program was developed conceptually. The idea being, this would be a scholarship program that would provide financial support for students from urban areas all across Ohio and eventually all across the United States…We announced the program…hopefully thinking that we could raise about $80,000 or $100,000 to start the program by the fall of 2005. Little did we realize that we would raise close to a million dollars in that period. We had an awful lot of people that were interested in the program and we were able to raise a significant amount of money to start the program in the fall of 2005 with ten urban scholars that each received about $10,000 to start with (Chase, personal communication, July 19, 2011).

In the 21st century the term _college access_ suggests not only entry into postsecondary institutions, but it also encompasses a myriad of challenges for many students, particularly for underrepresented and low-income students (McPherson & Schapiro, 2006). Researchers contend that factors related to tuition costs, racial
discrimination, social disadvantages and lack of adequate academic preparation have contributed to the vast under-representation of these groups of students enrolling in most state flagship universities (Hagedorn & Tierney, 2002; Tebbs & Turner; 2006). For many middle and low income families the most significant barrier to postsecondary education is related to cost (Tebbs & Turner, 2006). While economic factors continue to weigh heavily in the college choice process, as noted by student narratives, equal attention should be given to cultural and social barriers and the habitus (i.e. behaviors) students draw upon to successfully navigate institutional structures.

This section extends Bourdieu’s (1990) concept of capital by exploring student behaviors (i.e. habitus) within institutional structures that often leave them feeling isolated and not part of the larger campus community. Exacerbating the educational attainment gap are feelings of isolation, race, class, gender and urban habitus (i.e. appearance/ dress and speech patterns), which accompany multiple aspects of their Black identity. Provided that students attending urban high schools across the state of Ohio have typically lower graduation rates (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010; Ohio Department of Education, 2011) and inadequate academic and social preparation for postsecondary education, it is not surprising that the overall levels of attainment for urban Blacks in this study have a difficult time academically transitioning to OU. In fact, data from the previous section highlight the very different resources that urban Blacks bring to postsecondary education, which include (a) inadequate academic preparation due to curriculum tracking, (b) lack of direct support and guidance from school personnel, (c) limited familial experience with higher education and (d) financial barriers.
Since Steele (2003) posits that Blacks perform at lower levels compared to their White counterparts at any point on the educational trajectory, a look at supportive mechanisms (i.e. pre-matriculation programs) that assist with the transition from secondary to postsecondary education is warranted. By exploring pre-matriculation programs and co-curricular activities, the researcher was able to see the role that social and cultural capital played in the transmission of educational advantages for low-income urban students.

Many multicultural pre-matriculation programs serve a dual purpose for incoming students (Hagedorn & Tierney, 2002). Designed for students from educationally or financially disadvantaged backgrounds, these initiatives facilitate student transitions from secondary to postsecondary institutions since they (1) provide academic and social support and (2) juxtapose negative school and/or community influences by providing missing pieces of information for students to successfully navigate postsecondary institutions. Specific to OU, pre-college outreach programs seek to provide a series of intensive interventions that accentuates academic development and social experiences for multicultural students (Ohio University 2011a, 2011d, 2011f). In keeping with Astin’s (1993) framework of student involvement/engagement and Tinto’s (1993) model of academic and social integration, pre-matriculation programs (1) supplement instructions received from academic units, (2) demystifies the college experience and (3) establishes sustainable retention initiatives and strategies which drives student success (i.e. complete matriculation).
Ohio University actively recognizes the educational barriers that multicultural students experience and has created infrastructures and institutional initiatives to support the educational transitions from secondary to postsecondary institutions through two types of pre-college programs. Through traditional college access programs and discipline focused pre-matriculation programs, student narratives demonstrate how capital is accrued and transferred through the following pre-college outreach/ matriculation programs at OU: The Ohio University Recruiting Society (OURS), the Junior Executive Business Program for Minorities and LINKS. Before providing narrative data, a brief description of each program is warranted.

The Ohio University Recruiting Society (OURS) originally known as the Ohio University Recruiting Service, was established in 1985 and was designed to assist undergraduate admissions recruit more multicultural students. The largest programs include multicultural student prospective (MSP), multicultural visitation program (MVP) and cultural connections. These initiatives focus on bringing high school students to the campus community in order to experience a brief instance of what life at OU would entail. During this program, students have an opportunity to meet and interact with current multicultural students, alumni faculty and staff (Ohio University, 2011c).

Implemented through OUs College of Business, the Junior Executive Business Program for Diverse Students targets diverse high school students from disproportionately represented cultural backgrounds who are interested in Business, as a career choice. The program consists of an intensive 8 day program designed to replicate a real college experience where students live in the residence halls, visit campus cultural
centers, dialogue with current college students and attend workshops on the college application process, securing financial aid and time management skills (Ohio University, 2011b).

Unlike the two aforementioned programs, **LINKS** is a peer mentoring program for first-year multicultural and disproportionately represented students. Established in 1984, by Dr. William Allen to assist student transitions from high school through their first year at OU, this program serves as the corner stone for support and assistance for multicultural students. This peer mentor program places emphasis on the academic, social, leadership and professional development experiences of African American, Latino/a, Native American, bi-racial, multiracial and first generation college students (Ohio University, 2011d). Evelyn, who worked with the LINKS program, through the Office of Multicultural Student Access and Retention (OMSAR) explained that “a number of student support services are available” (Evelyn, personal communication, May 18, 2011) through LINKS for multicultural students, which include one-on-one mentoring, free tutoring, academic workshops (i.e. study skills, time management), professional development workshops (i.e. communication, dress, networking), leadership and workforce development (i.e. student involvement, study abroad), academic monitoring and tracking, study tables, quarterly socials and community service involvement

A common thread found among the three pre-college matriculation programs at OU is the student-centered enrichment aspect - inclusive of programming that targets specific groups of students (i.e. Black, underrepresented, disadvantaged). Although the
admissions and Business pre-matriculation programs assist initial student transitions for shorter periods of time, the LINKS program is at the helm of providing multicultural students with financial access and retention initiatives during a student’s entire freshman year. Collectively these programs supplement academic units by demystifying the college choice process. This is carried out by providing direct guidance and services to students and their families and by providing information about college admission, peer mentoring, college visits, academic enrichment and academic counseling/ advising.

For research participants, involvement in the LINKS pre-matriculation program was a scholarship requirement. Although scheduled to participate in the entire pre-matriculation component, Christopher and Eve did not participate in the program in its entirety. For instance, Christopher “didn’t know it [pre-matriculation] was mandatory” (Christopher, personal communication, May 2, 2011). One of the first jolting lessons that Christopher learned about the LINKS program was accountability. His initial transition from secondary to postsecondary education involved a level of incongruence between his pre-college culture and that of the institutional culture related to timing and accountability. According to Kuh et al. (2006) the greater the distance between the two cultures, the less likely students are to persist. For Christopher, the only thing he really remembered about the “multicultural week long camps was being surrounded by a lot of non-White students. Then I get here during matriculation, and it’s like all White kids…Looking back they [LINKS staff] made it seem like there were more multicultural students than there actually are” (Christopher, personal communication, May 2, 2011).
According to Christopher, meeting together with non-White students during pre-matriculation served as a mask for the actual demographic make-up of the entire OU student body enrollment. This highlights the importance of merging perspectives of multicultural students between their pre-college experience and that of the institutional culture (i.e. PWI) and the influence that this context has on the matriculation of multicultural students. Eve, who also missed the LINKS pre-matriculation component stated when she first enrolled in the university, she perceived she was “thrown in there” (Eve, personal communication, May 12, 2011). Instead of meeting together with a collective group of multicultural students, during a specific time period, she informally joined a few other students and toured the university. Although she missed the formal pre-matriculation portion of LINKS, she was still required to participate in a mini version of the LINKS pre-matriculation program. She stated,

   It [orientation] was only a day and I just walked around campus…I didn’t like it at all. Afterwards, it was fine once I started meeting people and getting used to the campus. I loved living in the scholarship hall because it was a lot of Urban Scholars. We were really close and we would always talk to each other (Eve, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

Eve, who attended a predominantly Black high school and lived in a middle class urban neighborhood, did not enjoy her initial experience at the university, until she identified other Urban Scholars, whom she missed during the LINKS formal pre-matriculation program. Eve’s narrative reflects the importance of community building initiatives with those who share similar interest, values and backgrounds and the impact that a critical mass has on student engagement.
Although Christopher and Eve were not first generation college students, both failed to attend the LINKS pre-matriculation program in its entirety, and lacked the mastery of the largely unwritten body of knowledge concerning institutional culture and the gap that exists between secondary and postsecondary cultures. Jasmine discussed the relevance of the LINKS pre-matriculation program and its role in helping her understand postsecondary institutional culture.

The LINKS pre-matriculation program was probably the best experience that really helped me make my transition into college because that was a time where I was able to be around people that looked like me...So LINKS really helped me build those friendships and support network with different administrators and staff around campus...If it wasn’t for that program, I don’t think I would have been exposed to as much resources that were offered here on campus or the different people I can talk to (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011).

Jasmine explained the ease of adjustment that can be experienced by racial/ethnic minority students who come from predominantly urban pre-college cultures. In this case, the LINKS program served to bridge the divide between the two cultures for those who are navigating unfamiliar predominantly White campuses for the first time. Furthermore, Jasmine’s narrative is a clear illustration of how navigational, cultural and social capital is transferred within the context of a pre-matriculation program designed for multicultural students. Embedded in the LINKS pre-matriculation model is the transfer of various forms of capital from those who understand the institutional culture (i.e. LINKS staff) to those who are unfamiliar with how to merge the pre-college [urban] culture. As such, OMSAR served as a hub where the transfer of information, concerning institutional culture was made available to multicultural students. Under the contractual scholarship agreement, the Urban Scholars received an initial set of deliverables in an intensive high
quality transition curriculum prior to their matriculation. In this manner, the LINKS program served as a conduit whereby the deliverables, in the form of capital, were transferred and accrued from staff to multicultural students.

Although OMSAR and LINKS serve a small percentage of OU multicultural students when compared to the larger campus community, greater benefits are accrued to the university in the form of student retention and engagement versus stop out and disengagement. For instance, it is plausible for students to come from geographical locations and cultures that are highly incongruent with the values, norms and behaviors of the dominant culture embedded at OU. However, the value added contribution that OMSAR makes to multicultural students and the larger university campus community involved access in more than a traditional sense. Through OMSAR and LINKS urban students are provided financial access opportunities with an intensive overlay of success strategies, whereby students are supported through complete matriculation. Furthermore, the infrastructure builds pathways to support student success (i.e. retention strategies, engagement) and incorporate student programming that allow for the transfer of various forms of capital (i.e. navigational, intellectual, social, cultural and human capital).

Jasmine, who lived in an affluent suburban area and attended a suburban school district with “50% Black and 50% White” (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 4, 2011) pre-college, experienced less difficulty adjusting to the OU institutional culture and explained she was less likely to think about leaving once she began matriculating. Comparatively speaking, Christopher, who lived in an urban neighborhood (pre-college) and attended a predominantly Black high school pre-college, had a much different
adjustment period to OU and explained, “Just being in isolation…this rural area. I hate it. I still to this day hate it” (Christopher, personal communication, May 2, 2011).

Seemingly it appeared as if students experienced better adjustment periods when moving from a more diverse high school to OU. For instance, if geographical locations and demographic make-ups of secondary schools mirror that of postsecondary institutions, students transition with relative ease; however, if the geographical locations and demographic make-up of secondary schools are not easily mapped onto postsecondary institutions, students have more difficulty with adjustments. It is critical to note here that socio-cultural behaviors, dispositions and expectations of urban students is a function of their urban culture, hence, it is important that campus leaders, staff and those involved in pre-matriculation programs understand how the cultural habitus (i.e. urban socio-behavioral patterns) of urban youth impacts their transition to a rural PWI.

Benefitting the larger campus community, OMSAR and LINKS work hand-in-hand with urban students to bridge the divide between the urban and rural institutional cultures. Unfortunately these 2 small institutional infrastructures have the enormous task of determining how best to integrate students into the larger campus community against the larger currents and opposing forces of students feeling isolated and excluded. As a way to enhance student engagement, in this context of isolation and exclusion, the Urban Scholars must complete a community service component as part of their scholarship requirement. Interestingly, instead of urban students giving back to their college community and surrounding areas, students opted to give back to their urban communities. Aqbar explained that the biggest requirement of the Urban Scholarship
program of giving back shaped his aspirations of wanting to give back to youth in urban areas that have been looked over in the public school system. He stated,

Graduation rates are connected to the poverty, which is connected to teen pregnancy, which is connected to incarceration rates. If you are a victim of one of them, most of the time you’re a victim of another one. So bringing them [urban students] down to school and showing them there are people who came from similar situations, who has been in your shoes and come from the same neighborhoods as you - we are making it. I’m trying to start a organization that would help those students who have been looked over and who have been directly affected by poverty (Aqbar, personal communication, May 29, 2011).

The researcher argues that a fair amount of capital is accrued for urban students through OMSAR, LINKS and their scholarship requirements. Hence, in Aqbar’s active accruement of capital he sought to transfer the same capital to youth living in homogeneous urban areas. These actions highlight the communal nature of education for urban Blacks, whereby Aqbar understood the restrictive nature of urban secondary education and sought to construct educational opportunities that served as a conduit for delivering cultural, social and navigational capital so other urban youth would not get “stuck” (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011) in the cyclical nature of urban place and space. Unlike when Aqbar attended an urban secondary school and choices about college were not presented early, he aspired to present urban youth with choices in hopes of infusing a college going culture.

Jasmine, a two time graduate of OU, talked about giving back to her high school alma matter located in the Early College High School District. She stated that annually her school has alumni day where students share their postsecondary experiences. She continued, “They wanted to know what college was like? What was high school like when I went there and what lessons I learned about college? They were really engaged
and wanted to learn more about college life” (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011). As a product of urban education, Jasmine understood the disparity of knowledge between secondary and postsecondary educational experiences of urban youth and used alumni day as a pipeline to transfer capital (i.e. intellectual, social, institutional, cultural).

Aqbar and Jasmine are unaware that their acts of giving back in the form of community service, by visiting their neighborhoods and sharing information about their postsecondary experiences carries weighted value in the form of capital. These forms of service drive home the importance of breaking the cultural reproduction of social inequality in educational stratification and providing college knowledge and presenting urban youth with choices to escape the urban context. Although studies examine the role of parents, school personnel and peers during the college choice (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002) and pre-matriculation processes (Fields, 2001; Gladieux et al., 2005; Swail & Perna, 2002), without reservation, the researcher argues these studies fail to examine how students themselves have agency in transferring accrued capital in an attempt to minimize knowledge gaps of the college choice process, whereby they equip students with skills and knowledge to successfully navigate postsecondary institutions. For Aqbar and Jasmine, the service and leadership component of their scholarship requirement was fulfilled through mentorship of urban youth attending urban area high schools. Abigail, a former Urban Scholar, continued the tradition of giving back following graduation and aspires to give back to her urban community by opening up a “community day-care center in the inner city” (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011). Student narratives draw our attention to a
In the context of a PWI, the institutional culture values individualism, whereas an analysis of student data indicates that educational opportunities for urban youth become communal in nature, whereby they give back to youth and adults occupying urban space and place. Ironically, while Urban Scholars were schooled in urban secondary institutions, the processes of transferring capital (i.e. intellectual, socio-cultural, navigational) capital accrued from their postsecondary experiences align with Shujaa’s (1994) definition of education - “the process of transmitting from one generation to the next knowledge of the values, aesthetics, spiritual beliefs, and all things that give a particular culture orientation its uniqueness” (Shujaa, 1994, p. 15).

Through community service activities, Urban Scholars gave back to their urban communities while aspiring to be entrepreneurial in spirit. These narratives illustrate how accrued capital (i.e. intellectual, social, navigational, cultural) is transferred from individual to individual (i.e. urban youth), to educational institutions (i.e. high schools) and communities (i.e. day-care). The researcher suggests that Urban Scholars gained a distinct understanding of institutional culture (i.e. rural PWI) through OMSAR, the LINKS pre-matriculation program and the community service scholarship requirement. Part of improving the quality of education for Urban Scholars attending a rural PWI includes supportive institutional structures, initiatives and people resources that are sensitive to and support the urban habitus of urban youth. Although smaller institutional infrastructures are at the helm of these initiatives for multicultural students, the narratives
that follow illustrate a disturbing trend that indicts the larger institutional structures with working against the efforts of policies, procedures and educational practices that understand and support the infusion of the urban habitus into the larger context - that is a rural PWI.

The Impact of Race, Class and Gender on Institutional Habitus

Since the 1970s, student development theories have been popular in higher education since they inform the practices of student affairs professionals, professors and campus leaders. According to Evans et al. (2010), this body of knowledge has been rarely used in relation to research and practices, rather the utility of student development theories have been used to better understand student behaviors, attitudes, perceptions, norms and outcomes. More recently, educators have come to rely on different development theories to understand the significant growth, development and maturation of diverse cadres of students. Although useful in understanding student development, Evans et al. (2010) admits that due to speedily changing social conditions, the experiences of students across time and location must be considered. This includes understanding how race, class and gender impacts this development. Hence, the purpose of this section is threefold. First, it highlights how race, gender and class act as structural barriers for urban students, and it illustrates how students draw on various forms of capital to overcome these barriers. Second, it addresses the intersection of race and other identities and the impact it has on the social construction of identity for Black students (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Finally, this section introduces CRT as a framework for understanding how the intersection of these variables impact student habitus (i.e.
behaviors), development and experiences, while simultaneously preserving the racial hierarchy.

As illustrated in the previous section when urban students leave the physical boundaries of urban areas, they carry with them an urban habitus, embedded with different social behaviors, norms and values. Student narratives revealed that urban students are fairly malleable when institutional infrastructures support their transition from secondary to postsecondary education. Although students possessed the ability to acquire and transmit capital to other individuals, educational institutions and communities, it is still unclear what happens when urban habitus - or behaviors - are not widely accepted or shared as high status cultural signals against the backdrop of the larger institutional structure. In the context of a rural PWI, participants mentioned class, race and gender as salient markers that impacted their educational experiences. In fact, they discussed ways that their racialized Blackness constructed borders and boundaries in their educational experiences at a rural PWI. As students spoke with pride concerning their educational attainments in terms of beating the odds and “making it out” (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 4, 2011) of urban geographical locales, the embodiment of urban habitus continued to create barriers which presented as salient cultural markers in speech patterns, dress and individual habitus.

After transitioning from an urban, predominantly Black geographical environment to a rural predominantly White environment, the urban habitus became notable. In fact, it is in the context of a rural PWI that notable urban socio behaviors related to race, class
and gender are apparent. Angel, shared her experiences of how urban place and space shaped her educational experiences at a rural PWI.

At the end of the day they [LINKS] prepared us for what was going to happen on campus but they didn’t prepare us for there being no brown skin people in the classroom. So it was definitely an adjustment. I felt like instantly I had to switch up the way I spoke to people just because of the way I was going to be perceived. That made me nervous and made me not want to participate in class. I mean I tried to dress a certain way just so I didn’t stand out completely…A few times when we were working in groups I felt I had to perform more than anyone else in the group because they were already expecting me to be lazy. A lot of times they would try to give me the little tasks to complete….It was maybe my junior year and I was taking a four hundred level English class. . . I sat down and the girl next to me asked if I realized it was a four hundred level English class and thought maybe I was in the wrong class or something (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

Although LINKS provided Angel with the necessary capital needed to successfully navigate the university, in the larger campus community, she experienced difficulty due to her racialized body and cultural features associated with her language and dress. As noted by Bourdieu (1990), cultural backgrounds predispose people to act and behave in certain ways. In addition, dress, accoutrements and language are viewed as expressions of the class habitus which is further realized through a set of material and linguistic signs (i.e. speech) and symbols (i.e. dress). For Angel, the realization of her urban habitus was highlighted in the context of a rural PWI, where she perceived that in order to gain greater access to knowledge and intellectual capital in the classroom, the urban habitus needed re-structuring in the larger campus community, otherwise it is probable that she would continue to experience exclusion in the academic environment.

Yosso (2005) would argue that Angel brilliantly capitalized on her ability to develop her urban habitus through the socialization process inside the classroom since
she recognized the value-laden beliefs of dominant groups. According to Omi and Winant (1986), race, acts of a structural barrier because its meanings and values are classified and constructed by dominant ideology and has great potential and power to shape larger societal perceptions about subgroup populations. As part of a subgroup population (i.e. urban, low class) Angel discovered that her urban habitus was constantly being structured and re-structured based upon the contextual environmental cues and the expectations of the involved agents. What emerged for Angel, however, was cross-cultural communication skills and her witty ability to draw upon different language registries and styles, which further equipped her with an ability to communicate with cross-cultural awareness while holding fast to her cultural history and language. Christopher and Akeem had similar experiences related to their utility of linguistic capital.

If I sense they [White’s] were getting towards that [stereotype] I’ll do my best to shut it down immediately…being as articulate as possible. I think a lot of people don’t expect young Black men to be articulate or to know what they’re talking about or have any kind of interest and at least have a high level of education (Christopher, personal communication, May 2, 2011).

People have a belief that Black people don’t have the ability to change how they talk - like we don’t know how to talk up and we don’t know how to speak professionally. We can only speak in slang…I take advantage of opportunities in class to speak or to do events on campus. Especially in classes where I’m familiar with the content of the class,. I use it as an opportunity to show people not all of us are stupid. If I do programs on campus and when people ask [me] questions, instead of just giving them the normal answer I explain it in detail to let them know, we do know how to operate in regular society and we’re not just illiterate or inconsiderate and ignorant people (Akeem, personal communication, May 12, 2011)

Christopher and Akeem’s narratives revealed they developed a stark awareness of the structural disadvantage associated with their urban habitus (i.e. language), race and
gender. The commonality between the narratives of Angel, Christopher and Akeem illustrate that urban students experience initial exclusion in the classroom; however, depending upon the type of capital urban students draw upon, this determines the amount of intellectual capital they have access to in the classroom. Although the researcher used the work of Bourdieu (1990), Harris, (1995); Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and Omi and Winant, (1986) to understand the existence of social inequality related to education and race, these lenses focus a lot on those in positions of power, which makes the educational experiences and socio-behaviors (i.e. habitus) of subgroup populations difficult to dissect in highly racialized environments. Hence, the importance of examining both macro educational practices of institutional infrastructures and micro socio behavioral practices of students who interact with these structures. What follows are examples of further classroom interactions between Urban Scholars, teacher and peer expectations and student performance, which demonstrate the shifting urban habitus. Eve demonstrated how she coped with the structural disadvantages associated with her race and urban habitus by drawing upon linguistic capital and code switching - or the syntactic constraints in spoken rule-based language including syntax (word order), phonology (the way that sound functions with language) and semantics (word meaning) (Delpit, 2002).

The way that I talk - I don’t want to say proper or talking Black or White - but if I’m speaking with faculty I’ll speak proper English but if I’m just with my friends then I’ll maybe speak a little more Ebonics. I feel you have to know when to turn it on and turn it off and the right environment because it’s a time and a place for everything…I think environment has more to do with it because in different settings, if you’re at a party or just relaxing then you won’t be so uptight and proper. But let’s say that you’re in an interview and you’re speaking out in class, you want to seem educated and you want to speak the right way so that everyone understands you. I just feel like it’s more environment (Eve, personal communication, May 12, 2011).
Eve’s speech/language patterns were adjusted based upon the context, informal socialization practices and the acceptance of it towards others in the classroom (i.e. her White peers and/or faculty). The collective narratives outlining the critical use of linguistic capital indicated that White peers have formed attitudes and perceptions toward Blacks who use the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or the Standard English (SE). In turn, the attitudes and the ability to categorize people according to racial stereotypes on the basis of their speech patterns shaped the awareness and ability of urban Blacks to discriminate linguistically between acceptable and unacceptable forms of speech patterns. For Cee Cee, context was an important part of code switching and displaying different language abilities; however, when she drew upon linguistic capital in a familial context, her identity was challenged by her friends and family back home in the urban context.

They [family] would say you’re in the middle of nowhere around all these White people. I always got teased for the way I spoke or because I was really light. That’s the part of my family that didn’t grow with me. They kind of distanced themselves from me. They would make fun of me and make jokes a lot like, “Oh Cee Cee you’re so proper (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 4, 2011).

Cee Cee recognized that the usage of SE in the urban context, where AAVE was most prominent, caused her a certain degree of loss. Conversely, the use of SE versus AAVE, provided her access to educational structures within the larger context of a rural PWI. This data suggests that language usage evokes various attitudes and perceptions from those in different context, and based upon environmental cues it creates a heightened sense of awareness for the speaker. Once Urban Scholars assess the contextual confines of the classroom and have the discernment to discriminate
linguistically between language varieties, they are able to determine the best language usage to gain access to different knowledge and intellectual capital in the classroom. According to Bourdieu (1990), accessing this knowledge is not equal since it is most often monopolized by dominant groups. Furthermore, this suggests for urban Blacks, gaining access to intellectual capital (i.e. knowledge) in the classroom is accessed differently and the amount gained is contingent upon their ability to display a certain level of [perceived] language competence from their White peers and/or faculty. The ability to code switch is a skill that is constantly being constructed and re-constructed as urban students interact with others from various cultural traditions, values and norms from different geographical spaces. According to Delpit (2002), language is part of our identity that becomes salient long before other identity markers.

Just as our skin provides us with a means to negotiate our interactions with the world - both in how we perceive our surroundings and in how those around us perceive us - our language plays an equally pivotal role in determining who we are: it is *The Skin That We Speak* (Delpit, 2002, p. xviii).

During classroom interactions with their White peers and faculty, participants understood that the utility of AAVE served as an index of intelligence, evoking racial stereotypes. According to Rosenthal (1974), children ages 3-5 develop attitudes and assumptions towards speakers of AAVE that mimic adult perceptions. Furthermore, Labov (1965) posits that awareness of dialectical difference further develops at the onset of puberty. These findings indicate that assumptions, attitudes and perceptions about the use of AAVE have spill over affects into secondary and postsecondary institutional settings and are hierarchically related to intelligence indices, power and privilege. In this manner, participants were able to react to environmental cues (i.e. racial stereotypes, low
expectations), construct language usage and habitus according to context in order to fluidly move between urban and rural environments and draw upon linguistic capital to gain access to intellectual capital in the classroom. For Urban Scholars, the loss-gain binary of familial support and intellectual capital, respectively, impacted the development of their social identity.

**The Meandering of Urban Habitus and Social Identity in a Rural Context**

The construction and development of social identity has received increased attention in the student affairs and psychology literature (Altbach, 2005; D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Evans et al., 2010; Kurlaender & Flores, 2005; McDonough, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 2004; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002; Tuit & Carter, 2008). How urban youth define themselves and align with others who share similar racial/ethnic, sexual, cultural, gender and geographical identities appear to be at the forefront of understanding the multiple dimensions of their identities. As noted by Jones and McEwen (2000), many of the student development models fail to address the multiple dimensions of social identity markers; rather they address a single dimension of development (i.e. sexual identity, racial identity). To further aid our understanding of the multiple dimensions of urban habitus, it is critical that a model which lends itself to the assessment of these dimensions inform the discussion of urban youth and their social identities in the context of a rural PWI. For urban students who deal with the complexities and intersection of geographical location, class, race, gender, and culture, the researcher is hesitant to assign one singular model of student development (i.e. racial identity development) to all urban students since their narratives draw attention to a
multiplicity of factors (i.e. race, geographical location, context, class, gender) that shape each individual experience.

Just as Whiteness as property demonstrates that holders of Whiteness have unearned privileges, benefits and structural advantages related to the rights of possession, use and disposition characterized by the right to transfer, use, enjoy and exclude others (Harris, 1995), Blacks embody their Blackness (i.e. dress, language usage, habitus), which yields structural disadvantages, as evidenced by narratives of participants in this inquiry. When variations of Blackness are performed in the context of a rural PWI, for Urban Scholars this means crossing cultural boarder and accruing and transferring variations of capital that are considered valuable in a hierarchical and racialized society. After reading student narratives outlining the utility of linguistic capital, scholars may contemplate that in order for Black students to be accepted fully into a rural PWI, they must not demonstrate the multifaceted nature of their urban habitus in its entirety. In this manner, the researcher posits that Blackness and the urban habitus are not monolithic, but both have dimensions which expand and reinforce multiple dimensions of the urban social identity. In the conceptual Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI), Jones and McEwen (2000) (See Figure 4) suggest that salient identity markers vary depending upon the context.
The Jones and McEwen’s (2000) MMDI model is critical in understanding how multiple variable impacts the social construction of identity for Urban Scholars. The utility of this model is significant since it allows for a fluid exchange of identity markers relative to context (e.g. family, values, cultural norms, current experiences) (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Although the MMDI model provides a lens to examine social context, data from this research highlights the missing discourse of the power and privilege dynamics at work in the construction and re-construction of social and racial identities of urban youth. A subsequent reason why the utility of the MMDI model is important in understanding the social identity development of urban youth is due to the permanent
fixture of racism, as noted by Bell (1992) that is embedded in the political, social and cultural milieu that shapes society.

Unlike the traditional student development models, the MMDI model (see Jones & McEwen, 2000) links social identity development to larger institutional structures of power and privilege, whereby “unmasking and exposing racism in its various permutations” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 92). Specific to this study, the MMDI model highlights the power dynamic at play in the context of a rural PWI and the multiple dimensions of social identity that resultantly emerge as a result of these intersections. As such, the behavioral interactions of dominant and subdominant cultures are captured, which further illustrates the analytic lens and importance of intersectionality. The work of Kimberle Crenshaw (1995) and Ange-Marie Hancock (2008) discuss the framework of intersectionality at great length in order to “conceptualize relationships between multi-level analysis of categories of difference” (Hancock, 2008, p. 71). From this perspective, the intersectionality of macro power dynamics and micro social identity markers can be viewed as a practical tool to unpack the creation and operation of systems and structures in a rural context that maintain privilege for some and restrict others (Crenshaw, 1995).

The narratives of Angel, Stephanie, Aqbar and Jasmine capture the intersectionality of macro and micro variables and how they impact their educational experiences and shape their social identity. New to the university campus, Angel was excited about being accepted into the Department of Music’ program and potentially building her flute skills. Although considered the “best of flute players where I was from” Angel could not determine “why the [university] professor was not progressing me
to higher levels in my flute studio classes” (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011). In her inquiry she discovered

She [professor] told me basically, “I don’t think this is cut out for you and I think you should go back to community college because I think that may be where you might do better.” Going to a community college never even crossed my mind. I got into OU for one and I got a scholarship to be here so I deserve to be here (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

Not willing to accept the alternative of attending community college at the whim of a suggestion since she received a scholarship to attend the university, Angel used navigational and human capital resources, contacted her high school band director, who was acquainted with the university flute professor, and discovered the following:

She [high school band director] came back and told me basically one of the only reasons they [university music program] decided to accept me into the program is because they needed to meet a minority quota and they needed more minorities in order to get more funding for the program...My junior year I switched over to English (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

For any student, identity markers such as race, class and ability level alone are not essentially oppressive; however, through practices of racism and classism the social hierarchies of privilege are maintained. For Angel this means the intersections of her multiple dimensions of identity (e.g. race, class) not only impacted her ability to make significant gains in her academic program, but it also hindered her ability to gain truthful information about why she was initially selected for the program of study. These interactions between student and institutional structures illustrate Bell’s (2000) concept of interest convergence. The converging of interest occurred when the Music Department benefited financially from recruiting a Black commodity into the program. Although Angel received minimal benefits of gaining access to the departmental program, due to
her racialized body, the larger benefits were accrued to the Music Department in the form of financial capital gains (i.e. program funding). Once the Music Department received the financial capital gains, there was no longer a need to have a physical representation of embodied Blackness (i.e. structural diversity), hence, the potential educational gains for Angel became so restrictive until she left the program - a clear example of maintaining and reproducing the racial, social and cultural hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1990).

According to Hancock (2008), the multiple marginalizations of race and class at the individual and institutional levels generate social and political stratifications that call for policy solutions to acknowledge the affects of the intersections of these variables. The researcher agrees that policy makers should have thorough knowledge of how race and class identities impact social interactions, but policy makers should also address the fraudulent and faulty practices from actors within institutional structures that promote structural and institutional racism for the sole purpose of institutional/departmental gain. This logic has largely gone invisible and unchallenged due to robust hegemonic structures and the unearned privileges associated with Whiteness. Stephanie had a similar experience when trying to gain information about an externship opportunity with an Assistant Dean.

I started off as a theater performance major...A lot of the professors here they were kind of stepping on egg shells when it came to me because they didn’t want to make me feel uncomfortable but they couldn’t act like it [race]wasn’t there. Especially when I started to talk to the Assistant Dean of the School of Theater about going to Cape Cod, Massachusetts for this program called Monomoy where they do ten plays in ten weeks over the summer. When I talked to her about trying out for it she told me, “I’m gonna tell you this and I’m not trying to discourage you but there are not a lot of people there that look like you. There’s not Black people there and they are all rich upper class Whites. So don’t be surprised if you are the only African American there. Not that I don’t think that
you couldn’t handle it or anything it’s just that I don’t want you to put yourself in that position not knowing how it will be.”... So I decided not to go because being a freshman in college it was something that I really didn’t want to deal with at that time…I ended up not doing it because I left the studio last quarter and I’m no longer a theater performance major. I’m just a general theater major (Stephanie, personal communication, May 6, 2011).

Similar to Angel, Stephanie encountered structural barriers and institutional racism when interacting with macro institutional structures. On the macro level, the Assistant Dean reinforced/ maintained dominant societal norms and values when she questioned Stephanie’s ability to function at a higher level in society assuming that her race and class identities would act as structural barriers. Skillfully, the Assistant Dean acted as a gatekeeper of capital (e.g. social, intellectual, cultural, navigational) while unassumingly explaining that the urban habitus had no place in the high status cultural milieu of Massachusetts, and most definitely did not have room for this habitus being performed in Monomoy.

As Jasmine interacted with the larger institutional structure during academic advising, she was met with challenges. Upon matriculation, Jasmine declared an Accounting major and received academic advising by those “outside of my scholarship” who worked with “students in pre-college and the College of Business” (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2012). During her first quarter Jasmine took “Econ 103, Psy 101 and Math 115” (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2012). After failing 2 of the 3 classes she presented with a .7 GPA during fall quarter of her freshman year. Using navigational and human capital resources, she sought the advice of OMSAR staff who provided more direct academic advising by inquiring about Jasmine’s career choice in Accounting and crossed referenced it with the college readiness skills, the level
of academic preparation and personal strengths Jasmine presented. Jasmine admitted she drew upon human and navigational capital very late in her freshman year. In fact, it was only when she found herself in academic distress that she sought out additional resources. She explained, “I didn’t take advantage of all the resources that were available to me, but…after deciding my strength was in English…I made the official decision that I wanted to be a teacher” (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011).

As a first generation college student, Jasmine relied heavily on institutional structures and human capital resources to assist her in building pathways of student success; however, in the context of a rural PWI, general academic advising session through pre-college were void of acknowledging structural barriers which impacted Jasmine’s academic adjustment to postsecondary education. When the macro institutional structures were not able to satisfy Jasmine’s academic needs, she sought institutional structures that actively sought to understand the level of preparation she received on the secondary level and engaged in intrusive advising (Heisserer & Parette, 2002) to directly guide her towards a better career choice. The overall aim of academic advising, and guidance is to closely align student aspirations with their abilities. For urban students, the academic advising process resembled a screening process and tracking tool to weed out unlikely candidates from programs, departments, disciplines and externship opportunities.

The researcher attributes the successful academic advising practices of the OMSAR staff to Heisserer and Parette’s (2002) concept of intrusive advising. According to these authors, intrusive advising is an intensive advising approach designed to (a)
augment levels of student motivation and engagement relative to co-curricular activities,
(b) facilitate informed decision making skills and (c) ensure academic success of
students. Specifically these authors advocate using this approach with at-risk college
students such as ethnic and racial minorities, students who are academically
disadvantaged, labeled with a disability, from a socioeconomic background and students
on academic probation, which considers the social and cultural needs of students.

Kuh et al. (2006) suggests that a comprehensive system of complimentary
initiatives like intrusive advising enhances student success. This bears out in Jasmine’s
narrative and the direct guidance and academic support she received from OMSAR. In
support of Heisserer and Parette’s (2002) concept of intrusive advising, Holmes (2005),
and Chickering and Gamson (1987) posits that academic advising is related to the
successful recruitment, retention and persistence of students. For instance, although
Jasmine experienced academic probation and lost her scholarship, during the initial stages
of matriculation, after directed guidance from institutional structures which accounted for
her socio-cultural needs, she successfully matriculated and completed her Master’s
degree in Education and graduated with the highest GPA of all research participants.

Once students determined that their interactions with the larger institutional
structures yielded individual, structural and institutional racism, based upon the multiple
social identity markers of race, culture and class, students turn to OMSAR, a smaller
institutional structure that factored in the multiple dimensions of their social identity.
Similar to Stephanie, Jasmine and Angel, Aqbar utilized campus resources, but relied on
training from the LINKS pre-matriculation program to assist him in navigating the
university academically. Initially, Aqbar began the university with a major in Athletic Training, but quickly realized he did not have the academic grades to persist in the program.

I followed a “what-if DARS” for the majority of my time here and for the major I wanted to be in…I’ve been at the university for four years and I never had an academic advisor for the majority of the time and I still don’t have one now. I knew what I wanted to do but I always struggled with my grades. My freshman year, my LINKS advisor taught me how to read my DARS. Once I knew how to read my DARS I knew what to expect in the advising sessions. I already knew the information he was going to tell me. I knew which classes I needed to take. I knew which ones I needed to graduate and which ones I needed to get into the majors. Not having an advisor wasn’t a hindrance I guess because I would meet with the [OMSAR] director and tell them the classes I would take. From an academic or a university standpoint I didn’t have an advisor…My assigned advisor was affiliated with my freshmen fall quarter major, athletic training. Once I told him I was leaving the program he just encouraged me to switch out. After he knew I was switching programs he wasn’t trying to help me… So I would be walking past his door and my DARS would be taped to his frame and I would take it down and keep going (Aqbar, personal communication, May 29, 2011).

Identical to secondary educational practice that failed to provide appropriate and direct academic advising and guidance, Aqbar encountered the same educational practices at the postsecondary level. In Aqbar’s narrative it is unclear if race and class impacted how he responded to academic advising during his matriculation; however, what is evident is that he relied on OMSAR and his accrual of navigational capital during the LINKS pre-matriculation program to bypass engagement with the larger institutional structure which provided minimum support. An analysis of data suggests that although formal institutional structures related to academic advising exist for all university students, urban Blacks have a tendency to gravitate towards informal and smaller institutional structures that consider their socio-cultural needs. In this manner,
students discovered OMSAR staff was better suited to assist them in making quality academic decisions (e.g. course load, declaring a major) versus reliance on the larger institutional structures that directly delimited their educational opportunities through academic and career tracking.

Analysis of data revealed several emerging patterns when the intersectionality of social identity markers germane to race, class and gender were considered in the larger institutional structures of power and privilege. First, data revealed that students who attended urban public secondary schools were not equipped academically to meet the criteria associated with certain degree programs and majors. During transitional and adjustment phases, students experienced inappropriate academic advising, low cumulative and quarterly GPAs, scholarship loss and forced changes in career majors supported by fraudulent educational practices. By tracking students during a specific time frame, data revealed (1) a disdain for the urban habitus in the larger context of a rural PWI and it further highlighted (2) students being pushed out of or excluded from the larger campus community due to salient and non salient social identity markers related to race, culture and class. Without the proactive support of officially trained university faculty and staff (e.g. academic advisors, department chairs, assistant deans), Urban Scholars were more apt to experience individual, structural and institutional racism germane to the following educational practices: career tracking, community college attendance and discouragement in seeking advance training opportunities that strengthen and supplement classroom experiences.
A second trend that emerged during the analysis of data is related to parallel educational practices at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. Throughout the K-16 pipeline, specific educational practices that mimic each other include the restrictive nature of both urban and rural spaces and places for urban students aspiring, attaining and seeking better educational opportunities. The sum total of these educational practices draw attention to the major inconsistencies between the rhetoric of supporting global student perspective and academic success and the racial realism (Bell, 1995b) of operating in hierarchical institutional structures of power and privilege.

A final analysis of student narratives highlight gender differences related to student interactions with larger institutional structures. Although participants experienced similar educational practices on both the secondary and postsecondary levels, gender differences were noted in how students responded to being excluded from the larger university campus community. For instance, while Black females in the study engaged with their academic advisors, Aqbar opted to remain in a liminal space and follow a what-if DARS instead of receiving direct guidance by his assigned academic advisor. At the time of the interview, Aqbar was a 5th year senior and had met the academic requirements to renew his scholarship after losing it for more than a year. Additional gender differences indicate that females tend to seek help quicker than their male counterpart when they foresee academic distress. In fact, females tend to seek advice on a wider range of topics and concerns (i.e. social, academic), obtain more information from various institutional representatives, utilize available institutional resources and services and seek direct guidance in and outside of the classroom regarding
their academic performance. On the contrary, Black males tend to wait longer to seek academic advising and prefer indirect academic advising guidance, even though research shows Blacks attending postsecondary institutions accrue more benefits with direct academic advising (Heisserer & Parette; Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Although research indicated that greater benefits accrue to low-income, underrepresented students who attend college (Terenzini et al., 2001), it is still unclear why Black males were excluded from the larger context of educational attainment. Furthermore, this may explain why Black males avoid assigned academic advising relationships, and resort to using accrued capital from the LINKS pre-matriculation program. If this is the case, Black males may place higher value on institutional structures equipped to understand cultural and racial structural barriers and who value communal learning. As a result Black males potentially gravitate towards institutional infrastructures that lend themselves to further development of their own educational aspirations, without being officially pushed out of the system.

A collective analysis of student narratives indicated that students who participated in LINKS used the program/infrastructure as a critical resource throughout their pre-matriculation and matriculation experience. As part of their intensive high quality transition curriculum, OMSAR actively informed students about available campus wide resources, yet urban students reported an increase in satisfaction with the intrusive advising model (Heisserer & Parette, 2002) implemented by OMSAR staff. Research suggests that meaningful contact and interactions with faculty/staff are a critical component for newly transitioning students in the early stages of their postsecondary
matriculation (Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Hollow, 2003); however, when you consider the intersectionality of race, class and gender, evidence suggests that power and privilege are culprits in assisting in the development of counterspaces for urban Blacks who attend the university.

In sum, this chapter highlighted the layering or overlapping effects of race, class and gender on the educational experiences of urban Blacks navigating the troubled waters of a rural PWI. According to Beverly Tatum (1997), when Black youth are in predominantly White environments, they receive environmental cues that trigger an examination of racial identity. The findings of this study are consistent with Tatum’s (1997) in that urban Blacks were responsive to environmental cues laced throughout the rural PWI causing their urban habitus and social and racial identity markers to be in constantly in flux, largely depending upon the context. Drawing again on the language of Whiteness (Harris, 1995) as a form of property to describe the racial hierarchical social order, student narratives illustrate that in the K-16 educational system, Black student experiences are devoid of the rights to possession, use and disposition of equitable educational opportunities. Rather than using Whiteness (Harris, 1995) as a framework to suggest Black students are passive victims of individual, institutional and structural racism and exclusionary educational practices this research draws on the utility of this framework and the MMDI model (Jones & McEwen, 2000) to understand how systemic practices (i.e. academic advising/guidance counseling) and policies (i.e. per pupil student expenditures) of educational institutions are flawed.
These frameworks highlight the reality of Whiteness through institutional practices of interest convergence and racial exclusion that reify the value of Whiteness and create exclusive categories that protect and maintain the racial hierarchy and accrued benefits of Whiteness as property. In applying Harris’ (1995) framework of property rights and race to a rural PWI as a tool to understand both structural and institutional inequalities, urban Blacks can be viewed as a commodity that meets institutional diversity initiatives (i.e. structural diversity) and yields economic capital gains for some departments. Given the historical nature of these educational practices, a CRT analysis would challenge university faculty, staff and administrators to (1) move past the traditional one dimensional view of structural diversity that offers a highly palatable way of viewing the visibility of embodied Blackness in the context of a PWI, (2) challenge campus leaders to identify, establish and sustain institutional structures and policies and educational practices that support the socio-cultural needs of its students, (3) identify collective educational practices and institutional policies that privilege some and disadvantage others and (4) identify and replace ineffective educational practices and people with transformative practices that assist students whose race, class, gender and culture relegates them to the margins, leaves them excluded and lacking necessary knowledge, skills and abilities needed to gain intellectual and social capital in and outside of the classroom (Yosso, 2005).

Identifying transformative practices would indeed challenge institutional structures that pose additional barriers for urban Blacks attending rural PWIs. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2009b), most research based on PWIs are
located in rural settings, hence it is critical that student affairs professionals, campus leaders and university faculty and staff are aware of the various ways that the intersectionality of race, class, culture and gender impact the educational experiences and social identity development of urban Blacks matriculating through rural PWIs. Although this section sought to attend to the contextual difference and its impact on the co-curricular experiences of students, difficulties still persist beyond the interaction of the urban habitus with the larger institutional structures. Perceived psycho-social barriers and the absent voices of urban Blacks attending rural postsecondary institutions present one of the greatest challenges to understanding and closing the gap between the differing educational practices of micro and macro institutional structures.
Chapter 7: The Watershed: Where Urban Culture and Institutional Structures Converge

What Happens When Women and Minorities are Strongly Encouraged to Apply

It is the policy of the university that there shall be no discrimination against any individual in educational or employment opportunities because of race, religion, color, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, gender, identity or expression, mental or physical disability, or military veteran status.

*University Affirmative Action Policy*

Equal opportunity is couched in Affirmative Action statements and is intended to afford women and minorities to compete in an equitable manner for employment and admissions to colleges and universities (Taylor, 2000; Tierney & Chung, 2002).

Specifically, the institutionalization of Affirmative Action has worked to transform American higher education (Thelin, 1985; 2004) for underrepresented and minority groups. In a plethora of reports, data from ACE (1988, 2000, 2004, 2009, 2011) illustrates a continual upward trends in Black enrollment at PWIs; however, in the midst of increased minority enrollment there is evidence that campus climate assessments are warranted due to attitudes of indifference, and subtle racial microaggressions, as evidenced through participant narratives. From a historical context, empirical evidence shows that PWIs have made significant steps in making minorities feel welcome as part of the campus climate (Davis, et al., (2004); however, narratives from participants indicate OU has not been successful in fully integrating urban Blacks into the educational system.

You’re like a fly on the wall or a fly in milk. That was something that I didn’t get used to until I was probably a junior - being the only Black person in your class… I say a fly in milk because I’m Black in this White world, and like a fly in milk they are looking at you (Abigail, personal communication, May 7, 2011).
These words spoken by Abigail reflect the collective perceptions of urban Blacks in this study, who matriculated through a rural PWI. Ancis et al. (2000) found that Black students attending postsecondary institutions face more negative experiences when compared to other minority groups. These experiences range from exclusion from the larger campus community activities to trouble gaining access to academic networks. In Ancis et al. (2000) study it was revealed that White students rarely associated with Black students and seldom included them in classroom/group activities, study sessions and social activities, which left Black students feeling invisible and not part of the larger campus community. Other researchers have documented findings of Black student isolation with literature pointing to perceptions about marginalization, alienation, connectedness and relatedness (Ancis et al., 2000; Banks, 2009; Booker, 2007; Davis et al., 2004; Fleming, 1984; Gossett et al., 1998; Taylor & Olswang, 1997).

While the extant research literature highlights important factors that contribute to college persistence and retention, absent are the voices of African American students themselves. In this study, narratives are replete with multiple incidences of structural and institutional barriers, assaults and racial microaggressions so subtle that participants failed to identify them as factors that contribute to perceptions of student isolation. Although participants were not able to specifically name their experiences, they exhibited a level of awareness and attentiveness to values which were congruent and incongruent with dominant mainstream educational practices, thus illustrating an understanding of the master narrative for constructing urban Black youth. Abigail, a student in the first class of Urban Scholars talked about her experience and the reception of the first class of
Urban Scholar students received once the program was implemented. “We had to constantly prove ourselves because it was some people who knew who we were and were watching us. A lot were waiting for us to fail and to say I told you this was not a good idea. So we had a lot on our plate” (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011).

Throughout her narrative, Abigail most commonly cited the dread of being perceived as intellectually, racially, socially and academically inferior by her White counterparts (i.e. students, faculty). Furthermore, she expressed caution about being vocal in class due of her attentiveness to the negative stereotypes associated with Black women. As Angel adjusted to the university, she struggled with attempting to identify the contributions she made to the university and whether the university was a good fit.

Why am I here? What’s the point? I always started second guessing if I should have gone to a Black college. I wanted to go and I don’t know if things would have been different. There probably could have been other situation, but I mean I questioned it and there were a few times where I began to fill out transfer papers” (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

Angel perceived the university to be very unwelcoming both academically and socially, which left her doubting her personal merit for being recruited to the university. Her academic involvement appeared to be most influenced by her relationships with White students and faculty who had low academic expectations. This conclusion is telling since Angel also considered transferring from the university, was accepted into a program to specifically meet a minority quota and eventually switched majors after being encouraged to transfer to a junior college, by a university faculty member. All these factors, as noted by Aronson (2004), can impact a student’s level of performance.
Similar to Angel’s response, Karmah expressed the disdain and lack of enjoyment in her classroom experiences, as an African American female.

Just making it as an African American female…is sometimes frustrating because it’s like why do I have to work extra hard? Part of me just want to give up sometimes although I’m not doing it. Either they’re [White professors] going to see me not for mediocrity or average and they’re going to accept it. But I’m not about to keep working and stay up until five in the morning…I would say the most draining part is managing expectation because you want something so bad. You know it’s a possibility that you’re not going to get it because you are a women first off. And then it’s like an African American woman. And then a short, African American woman. I mean it’s like I got the short end of every stick. So it’s kind of draining and it’s like why am I about to work this hard and get this excited about it…So it’s draining that you always have to prove yourself and people expect so much and so highly of you. I really can’t fail, but if I do fail then what? Did I fail because I made a mistake or did I fail just because I’m not intelligent enough or because I’m not wise enough or I’m too sensitive. It’s always those connotations that come with it (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011).

Karmah viewed her academic experience as substantially impacted by race/ethnicity, gender and stature/physical build. Ironically, Karmah’s idea of Black female performance is similar to Aqbar’s description of Black male performance and how he performed his masculinity in the context of a rural PWI. Collectively, these narratives illustrate that racialized bodies and the performance of Black femininity and masculinity in the context of a rural PWI, can be restrictive. What is less clear is how performance of femininity and masculinity shape the urban habitus. If context does impact urban Black femininity and masculinity, an unsupportive socio-spatial context is not a likely place where urban Blacks are willing to take risks associated with student development, engagement and intellectual growth, especially in relation to White faculty and staff who (1) share different cultural values, (2) provide minimal guidance and understanding about the student’s academic development and (3) are perpetrators of racial stereotypes,
microaggressions and racial assaults. In the current research study students responded to stereotype threat and racial microaggressions in different ways. In the next section, narratives illustrate how urban students respond to and negotiate a campus climate saturated with stereotype threats, where students and faculty microaggress against urban students in both academic and social spaces. Student responses were inclusive of (1) self-censorship, (2) proving them wrong and (3) leadership opportunities.

*Self-censorship.* Based upon Angel and Karmah’s experiences in the classroom, neither of them critically thought about the role their White peers and/or professors played in creating an unwelcoming classroom milieu, which left the student’s questioning their academic abilities, merit and intellectual contributions to the university. To understand how the larger campus community perceived the performance of urban Black femininity and masculinity, the researcher probed participants about perceptions of urban students attending a rural PWI. Out of frustration, Karmah responded, “They don’t know I’m an Urban Scholar. They see me as a Black girl walking down the street and they probably think I’m in sports! They may figure I am on scholarship because I *am* Black” (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011). Karmah’s narrative is indicative of invisibility of the urban Black body within the larger context of a rural PWI. This is significant since structural diversity (i.e. numbers) and the embodiment of Blackness, appear to translate into being barely visible in and outside of the classroom. Ironically, the same invisibility perceived by urban Blacks, translates into significant gains for the university in relation to the visibility of minorities. To counter the invisibility
experienced in a rural White context and minimize racial stereotypes among White faculty, staff and students, urban Blacks often resort to proving themselves.

**Proving them wrong.** According to Tuitt and Carter (2008), the urge to prove yourself is a psychological response to subtle forms of racism. In the above narrative, Karmah’s need to prove herself led to more stress during classroom interactions, all of which impacted the level of student engagement. Another participant discussed strategies to counter the negative effects of racial assaults and threats associated with urban Black academic achievement.

I mainly show examples because if they [Whites] see you when you’re about your business and you’re doing what you have to do, then they see that you’re a Black person. You’re smart. You do your work. You want to graduate. So I think it’s more about actions and proving people wrong…We [Blacks] have to prove ourselves. We have to achieve our goals…I really don’t think about it [stereotypes] that much unless the conversation actually comes up… I feel like it happens often but it’s something that can be so subtle that you don’t really notice it right when it happens. If I really think about I’m like I was the last person to get picked or I had to try my best to do this. I try my best not to let it bother me…I’m just constantly working hard and you get tired. It’s like oh my God- I’m overwhelmed. There’s always a little part in the corner where I just want to go home! It’s so much hard work but you just have to go through it. It’s all a part of the process, I guess (Eve, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

Several of the research participants realized that beyond structural diversity, there are very real consequences when their White counterparts (i.e. faculty, peers) microaggress against them. For example, Eve recognized that being stereotyped carries a level of psycho-social adjustment, since emotionally she felt “overwhelmed” (Eve, personal communication, May 12, 2011) by the inability to counter negative preconceived notions regarding Black underachievement.
Leadership opportunities. An analysis of data illustrated that stereotype threats, racial microaggressions and campus climate have varying effects on urban Blacks in and outside of the classroom. Angel considered transferring to an HBCU and grappled with student engagement in the classroom; Karmah questioned her merit for being at the university; and Eve ignored atmospheric threats. On the contrary, Akeem dealt with the same issues by getting involved in leadership opportunities and being vocal in class. Unlike the females, he created a visible space for himself.

I think by taking advantage of opportunities in class to speak or to do events on campus especially in classes where I’m familiar with the content. If I had the opportunity in class to speak on it, I will. I just take that and use it as a opportunity to kind of show people like hey look, not all of us are stupid. I also do programs on campus and when people ask you questions and instead of just giving them a normal answer I explain it in detail. Sometimes I go out of my way to let it be known that there are educated Black people on this campus and we do know how to operate in regular society. We’re not just illiterate or inconsiderate and ignorant people (Akeem, personal communication, June 12, 2011).

In an atmosphere clouded with threats and racial assaults male and female responses varied. In the same unwelcoming educational environment, Black females haggled with not reinforcing the stereotype of the “angry Black woman” (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011) while Akeem used it as a catalyst to disprove stereotypes relative to Black males. Akeem countered these stereotypes by engaging in visible leadership opportunities in and outside of the classroom. He also used self-censorship in response to fearing or confirming the Black male stereotype concerning their aggressive and hypersexual nature.

I really do try to avoid those situations like being alone in a room with [White] people. If I don’t really know them, I make sure the distance between us is obvious. I make sure that I’m not appearing to be up to something suspicious. If I’m going up town, especially during the feasts, I’ll make sure that I really watch
the situation. If it’s something going on somewhere and it seems kind of bad, I avoid it (Akeem, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

Similar to Akeem, Christopher resorted to self-censorship in response to Black male stereotypes related to aggression and hyper sexuality. He explained when walking home during the day and at night, if he is “behind a White girl I will stay five paces back to the right or left so she can easily look over her shoulder and see that I am not trying to creep upon her…I’m not going to rob you or try to rape you” (Christopher, personal communication, 2011). In assessing the reaction of Black males to Black male stereotypes in the environmental context of a rural PWI, the researcher was still unclear why there was a similar thread of focusing on the physical distance with the opposite race and gender. Aqbar offered more insight;

It was a weird adjustment. That was probably the hardest adjustment I had coming to school. In an urban environment when it came to something as simple as trying to go out to a party if it was back home, you always have to be aware of your surroundings. No matter what’s going on you’re always aware of your surroundings. If I’m at a party back home, even though I’m trying to have a good time my head is always on the swivel, looking around and seeing who’s around me. I’m trying to notice if people are looking at me or if they thinking I’m looking at them. When I came down here [to the university] it was almost like I was always on the defense. Like when you’re driving you’re always the defensive driver where you have to know what you’re doing but be aware of everything else when you’re on the road (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011).

Research participants referenced the overall effects of how they perform the urban habitus and the racial stereotypes that come as a result of this performance. Unlike their Black female counterparts, Black males did not encounter stereotypes solely in relation to academic performance, but also relative to interpersonal behaviors and expectations. In the larger academic and social context, urban Black males report exclusion from
interactions with their White peers and intergroup relations. Furthermore, it can be concluded that many of the social, academic and cultural networks available to urban Black women are not as readily available to urban Black men, especially if it depends upon appearance and ways Black males perform Black masculinity/urban habitus. It is critical to note that although Black females appeared to be more conscious about their appearance (i.e. dress, language usage) and how this impacted their educational experiences, Black males were less flexible in the way they performed Black masculinity when compared to their Black female counterparts. For instance, Aqbar presented with a massive body build and encountered stereotypes associated with male athletes; Christopher had visible tattoos on his neck and body, and had been asked about his involvement in gangs; and Akeem presented with hair locks and dreads.

Unlike the experiences of White males attending a rural PWI, one of the byproducts of racial stereotyping for Black males is the social distance, behavioral isolation and exclusion. Although the hypersexual behaviors of Black males (i.e. rape) represent a historical lens, traces of it are evidence in the academic and social experiences of urban Black males attending rural PWI in the 21st century. As such, the physical separation of Black males from the larger university community is exacerbated. In her work, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) examines how race and gender are typically viewed as one singular category. As juxtaposition, Crenshaw (1989) argues this singular framework “erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex
discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group” (p, 140). Applied to the current study and the expectation of urban Black male behavior, this means stereotypes related to race discrimination (i.e. Black), class discrimination (i.e. urban, low income) and gender discrimination (i.e. male) are viewed in relation to the race, class and gender of privileged White males. A CRT analysis from Crenshaw (1989) would suggest that because the focus is on privileged White males, the behaviors of urban Black males become distorted, when in fact, the intersectionality of factors that comprise urban Black male behaviors is actually greater than race, class and gender discrimination. This skewed view is a re-presentation of the traditional single dimensional view of urban Black male behaviors. Although this view is influenced by privileged White males, as noted by Crenshaw (1989), it is critical to note that due to the narrow scope and rigid parameters of privileged White male behaviors, this has a tendency to further marginalize urban Black males who do not fit into these boundaries. From a historical context, Crenshaw (1989) used the analogy of White men raping Black women as a form of racial terror, while the chastity of White women was held in high regard. According to the narratives of urban Black males, the protection of the White female sexuality is still held in high regard, with White women fearing Black males who do not fit into the narrowly defined scope of privileged White males’ behaviors.

Black males in this study described a double awareness or consciousness about the behavioral expectations of urban Black males in response to fearing and confirming the stereotypes, actions and behaviors of urban Black men and they were diligent not to fulfill this stereotype in the socio-spatial confines of a rural PWI. In this manner, urban
Black males in this study consistently created success strategies that disrupted atmospheric threats and racial assaults. These disruptions were elicited by their desire to destabilize power relations that so often confirm stereotypes of Black men and protect themselves from the potential of being viewed as Black savages in relation to White privileged males.

Several explanations may explain the gender differences in how females and males respond to a campus climate imbued with racial stereotype threats and microaggressions. First, females could be more threatened by these subtle forms of racism since they resort to ignoring assaults and threats, consider transferring from the university and doubt their intellectual abilities. Next, it may be assumed that Black males are more competitive in the context of a rural PWI when compared to their Black female counterparts. The stereotype being - women are less competitive and perform less well in competitive academic and social environments. A final explanation for the differences could be that Black women are more competitive than their Black male counterparts; however, the threat in the air (Steele, 1997) would lessen their ability to perform in the context of a PWI.

It is important to note throughout the K-16 educational pipeline, narratives from research participants drew attention to educational practices related to curriculum tracking by high school guidance counselors, university academic advisors and faculty members. A closer examination of these gender difference indicate that although Black females received more direct guidance in the college choice process, received information much earlier from school personnel and applied to more schools, they were
tracked downwards towards college majors that align with traditional racial and gendered roles (i.e. from Accounting to Education; from Business to Family Studies, and appeared less prepared to deal with subtle forms of racism in the context of a rural PWI. Conversely, their urban Black male counterparts received less direct guidance about the college choice process, received college knowledge later, experienced academic tracking by high school guidance counselors, avoided being academically tracked by university academic advisors/faculty and appeared more prepared to deal with racial assaults in the context of a rural PWI.

Although research participants carry and perform the urban habitus and were able to highlight the structural and institutional barriers associated with race and space, and the overall effects it has on academic and social experiences, they employ various responses and coping mechanisms in dealing with these barriers, such as proving others wrong, engaging in leadership opportunities and self censorship. Specifically, a collective analysis of data illustrated that students responded to threats and assaults by dispelling myths related to Black underachievement. In fact, the amount of anxiety, energy and advanced preparation needed to anticipate threats in the air caused research participants to constantly be “on guard” (Aqbar, personal communication, May 29, 2011) and had a grave affect on the level of achievement in the classroom. While research has been done on the detrimental effects of stereotype threat and racial microaggressions (Aronson, 2004; Steele, 1992; Steele, 1997; Steele, 1999; Steele, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele & Aronson, 2004) little has been written about how to mitigate the physiological and psychological toll (e.g. Black tax) imposed on Blacks who
attend PWIs in the K-16 pipeline. Interestingly, how research participants perform Black femininity and masculinity in the context of rural PWIs impacted their socio-spatial behaviors. Data analysis illustrated that experiences with racist assaults and stereotype threat had very different outcomes for urban Black males and females, further implies that we still live in a society where race, gender and class has built in benefits and consequences that affect academic and social environments for Blacks and draws attention to the covert and subtle behaviors which occur in and outside of the classroom that shape the educational experiences of Blacks students. While formal educational practices are taking place related to admission, retention efforts and student engagement, so too are racial threats, assaults and microaggressive behaviors that frame the way urban Blacks are viewed in the context of a rural PWI. According to Boykin (2001), this process “conveys certain ways of viewing the world, ways of codifying reality” (p. 192).

Although research maintains that students bring their own identities into the classroom (Fordham, 1996; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Steele, 1997; Tatum, 1997; Willie, 2003), student narratives indicate that institutions and classroom become very difference places and spaces for different racial and ethnic groups. Furthermore, these narratives serve as firm examples of cues given that prompt continual construction and re-construction of the urban habitus, the need for sustainable institutional infrastructures to support multicultural student matriculation, engagement and social and academic curricular development. Empirical evidence from researchers in higher education, psychology and sociology (Gardner, 1983; Gardner, 1999; Gardner & Hatch, 1989; Sedlacek, 1987; Steele, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 2004) continue to reiterate the
importance of considering different cultural group experiences. As such, the narratives that follow present multiple data points that reiterate the racialized and hierarchical nature of higher education and it refutes the color-blind rhetoric (Solórzano et al., 2001; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998), which claims to diminish the experiences of urban Blacks matriculating through rural PWIs

*The “White Credit” and the “Black Tax” of Interest Convergence*

A few researchers have framed tenants of CRT to understand different educational practices (Adamson, 2006; Gillborn, 2005; Harris, 1995; Iverson, 2007; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Milner, 2008b; Patton et al., 2007; Tate, 1997). While CRT examines issues of power and privilege and places race at the core of educational discourse, scholars are charged with using the CRT framework in its entirety to understand the complexity that race has in the educational setting (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). In particular, Bell (1980) used a principle of CRT (i.e. interest convergence) as a conceptual tool to understand the broad theme of race in education. Using the example of *Brown*, Bell (1980) illustrated how and why the decision of *Brown* improved the international image of the U.S. during a period of U.S. civil rights history. As a result, Bell (1980) suggested that Whites supported civil rights policy only because it resulted in political and social advantages for them along with a lesser benefit accrued to persons of color. As such, Bell (1980) suggests that a converging of interest only comes for Blacks when Whites accrue more political, social and or economic gains to retain their superiority in a hierarchical society. Bryan Adamson (2006) also employed CRT and interest convergence to illustrate the debate over school finance reform in the
state of Ohio and suggested that any school financial reform that benefits Blacks without accrued benefits to Whites will be rejected.

For many postsecondary institutions, staple practices of sound vision and mission statements demand incremental steps toward student access and performance improvements. Specific to OU, there appears to be a strong enthusiasm for vision and mission statements to reflect its priorities - especially related to diversity and producing global citizens.

Ohio University holds as its central purpose the intellectual and personal development of its students. Distinguished by its rich history, diverse campus, international community, and beautiful Appalachian setting, Ohio University is known as well for its outstanding faculty of accomplished teachers whose research and creative activity advance knowledge across many disciplines… Ohio University will be the nation’s best transformative learning community where students realize their promise, faculty advance knowledge, staff achieve excellence, and alumni become global leaders (Ohio University, 2011e).

At OU, policy, program and university practices are driven and supported by mission statements throughout various colleges and departments. In fact, few would disagree that OUs written mission statement promote diversity, student achievement and global citizens. The acknowledgement of demographic and racial trends is so apparent that various departmental websites, job and scholarship applications at OU are laden with Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity statements encouraging minorities, veterans and underrepresented groups to apply. What remains unclear is what happens when these cadres of applicants do apply and are admitted to work and or study at a rural PWI.

Based upon an analysis of data from student narratives, university, school and departmental mission statement pertaining to an inclusive and welcoming climate is rhetorical in nature. To understand the disparity between diversity matters, institutional
rhetoric and the racial realism (Bell, 1995b) of urban Blacks attending a rural PWI, the researcher uses Bell’s (1980) framework of interest convergence.

According to ACE (2000) and Milem (1999), institutional diversity initiatives yield better educational environments, greater attention to and satisfaction with the quality of education, better relations between Black students and their White peers and enhanced social and educational outcomes. Annual and biennial reports released by ACE highlight minority college enrollment trends, postsecondary attainment, degrees conferred and the importance of diversity and demographic trends in an effort to assist policy makers, campus leaders and the general public in providing support for structural improvements in higher education (ACE, 1988; ACE; 2000; ACE, 2004; ACE, 2009; ACE, 2011). These ACE reports illustrate tremendous progress concerning minority enrollment in higher education related to access, equality and institutional initiatives to accommodate them; however, it is still obvious that when the two structures converge (e.g. urban Blacks, rural PWI) Blacks are continually faced with challenges and structural and institutional barriers associated with their racialized bodies (Allen, 1992; Boykin & Jones, 2004; Fleming, 1984; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Grier-Reed et al., 2008; Steele, 2003). In this next section, the researcher’s argument builds on Bell’s (1980) framework of interest convergence and the insight of Urban Scholars themselves to illustrate how urban Blacks continue to face issues germane to racial microaggressions, stereotype threat and academic and social isolation as they adjust to the context of a rural PWI. Before the researcher illustrates this phenomena, it is fitting that the framework
begin with the perception of campus leaders who discuss potential benefits of recruiting Urban Scholars to the university.

I think for students it’s helped them first and foremost to acquire a college education. Retention and graduation rates for Urban Scholars is pretty high so that’s a good sign. They are coming, they’re achieving and they’re graduating. The complimentary programs that are on campus help them to develop individually personally, so they have opportunity to network. They have opportunity to become involved in social organizations. They have opportunity to demonstrate leadership. They have opportunity to grow and develop in very very positive ways. From a personality standpoint as well as an academic standpoint the program has accomplished much. What it has done for the university is focused our attention back on diversity. It has created for us an opportunity, not only for us to bring students of great promise and great achievement, but it has helped us create what I call a critical mass. And that is to say that as we have brought the Urban Scholars, so to have other students of color come to the university, who are supported in different ways. We’ve raised the enrollment of students of color for the last seven years… Now that means that when you come to visit Ohio University as a perspective student, you see other students like you. I think it has helped our campus to become more attractive; it has helped us recruit more students of color; it’s made us a better campus because we’re more diverse…and it makes us a much stronger university (Chase, personal communication, July 19, 2011)

Chase clearly outlined the benefits accrued to both the institution, as well as the individual Urban Scholar who attend the university. While students reap academic and social gains (i.e. graduation, opportunity, networking), the institution accrue benefits through enrollment numbers (i.e. structural diversity) whereby making the institution more attractive to potential students. The contents of Chases’ narrative supports the work of Milem (1999) who argues that diversity benefits are accrued to individuals, institutions and society; however, what Chase’s statement fails to address are the barriers that students of color - who make up structural diversity - face as the university accrues these benefits. According to Milem (1999), it is significant to determine what is meant by diversity in the context of accrued benefits. For instance, although Chase proudly
acknowledged that enrollment for students of color at the university has increased over the last seven years, the researcher posits that his perception of diversity is heavily skewed towards the traditional one dimensional view of structural not interactional diversity. This skewed perception is evidenced through student narratives that illustrate a very different picture when interactional diversity is considered.

Of course, students reap financial benefits, are presented with opportunities for growth, maturation and development; however, as the numbers of students of color increase on the university campus, without adequate attention to interactional diversity, the academic and social experiences of this increasing population may become difficult to assess. Without an accurate assessment of their experiences, it becomes even more difficult to ascertain the pulse of the campus milieu. According to OUs Office of Institutional Research (2010), from 2004-2010 student enrollment by race/ethnicity experienced a slow incline for African American students. In 2004 the total number of Black student enrolled on the OU campus was 3.3%. In 2005 enrollment was 3.7%; 2006 (4.0%); 2007 (4.5%); 2008 (4.9%); 2009 (5.0%) and 2010 (4.5%). With over 90% of the student undergraduate population being White, Chase discussed the universities reception of the Urban Scholars Scholarship program.

I think it was very positive from the standpoint that in the open forum that spring. When I came to interview there was an open forum on campus for students, faculty and staff to come and ask questions. One of the questions that I was asked had to do with what I was going to do to increase the diversity of Ohio University. Many of those questions were asked by students, which I liked. Because that said to me the students saw a need for Ohio University to be more diverse. One of the interesting points that came up in that whole forum was that many of the students said that their high schools were more diverse than Ohio University. So again, this program was a way to kind of create the opportunity for more students of color to come to Ohio University. But also to increase that enrollment and made
our university more diverse. So the community, I think, welcomed the Urban Scholars program with open arms (Chase, personal communication, July 19, 2011).

Although the researcher probed Chase to learn more about structural and interactional diversity, his answers still alluded to the importance of structural diversity and the physical representation of diversity through racialized bodies. Since the extent of diversity, for Chase, revolve around enrollment numbers it is critical that student narratives (i.e. racial realism) be compared to Chase’s rhetoric. Although Blacks and Whites transfer to various institutional types, when Whites transition to OU they are still surrounded by geographical spaces and places characterized by Whiteness; however, when Blacks transition from urban spaces and places to rural OU, they perceive that the larger campus community is not accepting and intolerable of cultural norms, values and traditions of urban culture. Hence the need for Urban Scholars to draw on various forms of capital, while modifying the urban habitus to gain access to certain macro level structures (i.e. academic advising, classroom interactions with faculty and peers).

Compared to Chase’s narrative, the racial reality of student narratives indicate that the campus community was not welcoming of the program. Jasmine, part of the first class of Urban Scholars explained her perception of the programs reception.

Our faculty advisors… gave us feedback on what we should do in those situations…Their main suggestions was not to let what people were saying get to us. They also told us [first cohort] not to stoop down to the level of those people…I don’t think many people knew I was an Urban Scholar. Not saying that I kept it secret but it was something that I didn’t highly advertise. It was kind of something that I liked to keep to myself because I knew I had a better advantage than other students. I didn’t really want to speak on it much because I didn’t want people to view me differently as everyone else. So when I was out with people socially, or was studying with people, I didn’t want people to think oh you’re one of them. I wanted people to think that I’m just a regular student and just trying to
get my degree like everybody else (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011).

Compared to Chase’s perception of the Urban Scholars program, rhetorically it was well received; however, according to Jasmine, the first cohort of Urban Scholars required the support and assistance of faculty advisors who gave advice on how to react to and handle the programs implementation. Although the Urban Scholars program was the brain child of Chase, the actual implementation was carried out by urban students who bore the brunt of some members of the campus community questioning the programs purpose. Aqbar, explained

There was a lot of backlash when the scholarship first came out because of the rural setting that we’re in and the [economic] hardships they face around here. So creating a scholarship that helps out those in an urban city that’s three hours away …it was kind of like What? I think the university sees us [Urban Scholars] as a charity case. A lot of people think the only reason that we’re here is because we’re Black or poor, or because they want to try to make the university more diverse. But they liken it to helping out poor little Black kids from the city or something like that (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011).

Aqbar confirmed that the universities whole mission was to increase structural diversity by using the commodity of Black bodies to accomplish its numbers. In addition, Unlike Chase who described their enrollment through the lens of “opportunity,” according to Aqbar, there is a school of thought that views the programs’ inception and the enrollment of the Urban Scholars as charitable. Akeem expounds further.

From some people you just kind of get that same feeling. They just look at you like, You’re not paying for school. Now that I know you’re here on a scholarship, you’re probably here just because the university needed more Black people or something. It’s just frustrating to hear that. A lot of White students say things like well I didn’t get a scholarship and my grades were the same or better than yours so why didn’t I get a scholarship? And my family doesn’t have money and it’s not fair to only give scholarships to this kinda people (Akeem, personal
The narratives of Jasmine, Aqbar and Akeem show an inverse relationship between structural diversity, as noted by Chase, and the quality of their social and academic experiences. In theory, the researcher argues that among faculty and administration, structural diversity (i.e. enrollment) is reported in a positive rhetorical light where students of color are treated equitably; however, in practicality Chases’ narrative is buttressed by student narratives who report less than equitable treatment of urban students attending the rural PWI. Hence, structural diversity can act as a smoke screen for advancing rhetorical institutional mission statements, making the campus look appealing, when in fact, it also signals the need to address the quality, not quantity of educational experiences of urban Blacks who attend rural PWIs. These narratives illustrate how racialized bodies and the academic talent of high achieving urban Blacks can be manipulated for the competing interests of the university. If researchers are not careful to interpret structural diversity through the lens of interest convergence, it seemingly can appear as progress for the university and a genuine commitment to interactional diversity.

Mills (1997) would categorize this convergence as an “exploitation of their bodies” (p. 11). As a campus leader, Chase’s account of the program’s inception may vary from student perception in that he mainly interacts with executive level university officials; however, student narratives illustrate that linking increased numbers of Black student enrollment (i.e. structural diversity) to student educational processes does not guarantee a nurturing and welcoming campus climate. To further understand what takes
place when the two structures converge - urban and institutional habitus - the researcher talked with Angel and Abigail, from the first cohort of Urban Scholars.

I know that there were a lot of people on the university campus that sort of felt like he [campus leader] was bringing in Black kids that might not necessarily deserve to be here. … I always second guessed if I should have gone to a Black college. Maybe things would have been different. There were a few times where I began to fill out transfer papers. But then other people in my life would tell me that I have a full scholarship. It was definitely an internal battle because one minute I was like I have a full scholarship, but on the other hand I was not happy. There were plenty of times that I went into the OMSAR office and would cry my eyes out…Then when I went home [during winter break] and told my mom and dad I wasn’t going back they were like but you are! They packed up my stuff and said the car is packed and it’s time to take you back. So I started to talk to people in the OMSAR office winter quarter. It eased up a little bit when I returned because I was able to talk to people…There was a lot of faculty that would actually take interest in us and come to roundtables. We were able to build relationships with those people and we even had the support of the President and his wife where we were able to talk to him about our concerns and he would actually sit down and listen to us (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

Angel’s narrative point to the value added of the OMSAR and diversity offices as an integral part of the institutions infrastructure, especially during a time when demographic changes to higher education were occurring. Her narrative also highlighted the need for the university to recognize and address barriers associated with the schooling processes of Blacks who attend rural PWIs (i.e. transfer students, drop out, stop out). Despite the larger campus community’s lack of involvement in the adjustment of Blacks attending PWIs, OMSAR continued to serve the social, academic and cultural needs of multicultural students matriculating through rural PWIs. Although support from 2 smaller institutional infrastructures is instrumental (i.e. OMSAR, diversity office) in supporting multicultural student access, retention and success, it is not enough to support the totality of student development. According to Angel, the presence of faculty and staff
of color make a significant contribution to institutional culture, related to assisting Black students clearly define their personal, social and academic goals. Hence, recruiting and retaining perspective and current faculty and staff of color would push the university past structural diversity, foster interactional diversity, improve mentorship, build relationships and increase the available human capital resources across the university.

With more structural diversity on college campuses, one would assume that progress would be inevitable; however, power and privilege are historically embedded within institutional structures that make it difficult for progress to occur. Abigail, from the first class of Urban Scholars, contextualized her matriculation in relation to student support as a way of gauging the institutional climate of OU. Once she began matriculation she explained her frequent weekend visits home since she was “homesick” and “hated the place” (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011). This perception changed once she realized that Chase and his wife were genuinely interested in her adjustment to the university.

We [Urban Scholars] had a chance to meet with her [wife] again towards the end of our fall quarter. That’s when I told her I was going home every weekend and being homesick. She started to email me once a week to see how I was doing and if I was here on campus. I would stop by and chit-chat a little. During spring quarter the university has moms weekend and my mom came down. Chase and his wife opened their house up. I introduced my mom to Chase’s wife and reiterated to her again how I was home sick so she said I’ll be her mom away from home… I mean just the fact that she took time to talk to me was so important…She introduced me to different programs around campus as far as the Black community was concerned and so that helped (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011).

Although being immersed in a college environment stimulates student development academically and socially, as illustrated through student narratives,
executive level support enhances this development. Angel and Abigail suggested that executive level support carries value, whereby it links the level of student satisfaction and educational quality to their engagement. Is it important to note the concept of othermothering here. Emanating from African American feminist literature, this framework has been applied to the communal, nurturing and cross-familial patterns of care that is historically part of the Black community (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002) specifically associated with women in the Black community (Hirt, Amelink, McFeeters & Strayhorn, 2008). According to Hirt et al. (2008), othermothering began during slavery, but quickly found its way to other social institutions causing women to have a great impact on the educational institution. Hinged on three components, ethics of care, cultural advancement and institutional guardianship, Gasman (2010) asserts that PWIs typically focus on ethics of care while neglecting the other two components of othermothering. To some degree, the response of Chase’s wife to Abigail’s lack of engagement represents ethics of care from a more seasoned representative of the African American campus community.

As indicated by Chase, the levels of opportunity available to Urban Scholars involved leadership, networking and involvement in social organizations; however, deeply embedded within these opportunities are multiple challenges for Blacks. Clearly, there are personal challenges that Urban Scholars face that cannot be met through traditional academic curricula; rather, these challenges are met by people who understand and are willing to act as extended family members for urban students who attend OU.
In the current research, a synthesis of data suggests that institutions and individuals acting on behalf of the institution view urban Blacks differently in relation to the overall additive value they bring to the university. It is critical to note that institutional rhetoric advocates on the behalf of diverse students; however, data suggests that rhetorical statement do not match the perceptions of urban students regarding their co-curricular experiences at the university. A consideration of the K-16 pipeline illustrate parallel educational practices that substantiate the value of urban students (i.e. curriculum tracking, inequitable school funding practices, interest convergence, isolation, exclusion) and is highly dependent upon context. The effects of these barriers encourage and perpetuate student segregation along the lines of race/ethnicity and class. Ironically, the same urban students who were considered less valuable than their suburban counterparts, related to per pupil expenditures, were considered valuable commodities at the postsecondary level. What is less clear is why the value changed. According to an analysis of data, student values changed due to the larger benefits accrued to the university (i.e. interest convergence). To substantiate this claim, Cee Cee explained the persistence of the university in recruiting her.

I took the ACT and the SAT and filled out the application for OU. I questioned whether or not I wanted to go to OU since it was in the middle of nowhere… So I got into OU and they immediately sent me the little packet about Urban Scholars. I filled it out because they were just so persistent. It was like you felt like they wanted you. I mean I knew it had a lot to do with me being a smart person but they don’t have many Black people there either. So they were trying to recruit. I knew they wanted me and they needed me there. I knew that I want to be there so it was a mutual thing (Cee Cee personal communication, May 5, 2011).

Cee Cee is a first generation college student who spoke openly about her need for financial access in order to attend college. In this narrative, Cee Cee recognized the
value of the cultural capital she possessed and the benefit she would bring to the university by adding to the structural diversity. While the university was able to provide financial access for Cee Cee in the form of scholarship monies, university benefits in the form of structural diversity were accrued. Therefore, the interest of Cee Cee and the university converged when financial needs were met and university enrollment numbers were met, making her part of the universities structural diversity. Akeem explained what it felt like to be caught in the cross fire of structural diversity.

The first series of questions they [White students] would ask is What’s your name? Where are you from? What sports do you play, here? And it’s like - well actually I don’t play any sports here. I’m on a scholarship thank you very much! … Then they kind of look at you like you’re not paying for school...now that I know you’re here on a scholarship, you’re probably here just because the university needed more Black people. It’s just frustrating. It’s frustrating to hear that because a lot of White students say things like well I didn’t get a scholarship and my grades were the same or better than yours so why didn’t I get a scholarship? And my family doesn’t have money and it’s not fair to only give scholarships to this kind of people. I just have to tell them I don’t make the university rules. I’m sorry that you can’t get a scholarship. Maybe you should apply to an HBCU and get a scholarship. It works the same way (Akeem, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

What is missing in all of the student narratives is the systemic structure that supports urban students once they matriculate in the university. It seemingly appeared as if the university aggressively pursued urban youth to attend the university; however, once the goal of structural diversity was met, urban students were left to the whelm of an unwelcoming institutional climate. Resultantly, students turned to individuals and smaller institutional structures who were welcoming (i.e. female othermothering figures, OMSAR, Multicultural Center (MCC), the Office for Diversity) and had an understanding of the structural barriers students of color face.
The challenges associated with increased structural diversity can create resistance and conflict amid different groups. Although Akeem encountered the discourse of why Black students are part of the university community, it is important to note the differences between Affirmative Action and diversity. Affirmative Action is a legal tool used in various contexts, designed to redress the efforts of past and present discrimination (Noguera, 2000; Taylor, 2000; Tierney & Chung, 2002; Yosso et al., 2004). Because of historical ills, institutional diversity is not legally mandated, rather, it is an effortful and mindful choice that institutions make when building infrastructures that supports diversity initiatives in the context of higher education (Taylor, 2000). In fact, Akeem’s White peers challenged him on the topic of Affirmative Action and reverse discrimination, as noted in the landmark decision in Regents of the University of California v. Bakke where a White applicant, Allan Bakke applied for and was denied admissions to the Medical School twice, since the university set aside sixteen of one-hundred slots for qualified minority applicants as part of the universities Affirmative Action program (Tierney & Chung, 2002).

Although the CRT tenant of interest convergence gives voice to the distinctive perspectives and lived experiences of urban youth, the researcher acknowledges the complex nature interpretation and how this could seemingly appear as a narrowly tailored use of race and geographical location in bringing Urban Scholars to the university. In fact, the researcher would suggest that the university has a compelling interest to recruit and retain a diverse student body while providing educational opportunities to students who would not otherwise have financial access to the university. Chase explained:
Without that financial support, many of these students simply would not be able to get a college education, whether it’s Urban Scholars with an urban scholarship, whether it’s a Pell Grant or an Ohio College Opportunity Grant. Whatever it is, without grants and scholarships, many students, minority students in our urban centers could not come to college because they would not be able to afford to pay for that college education. And their parents wouldn’t. So it’s vital. It’s critical. That was the other reason for creating the program to try to open the door as it had been open for me and others before me. This [program] was a way to open the door to opportunity for students of color (Chase, personal communication, July 19, 2011).

A CRT analysis would suggest that embedded within the solution of historical inequitable educational practices are challenges driven by a highly competitive marketplace discourse which subjugates Black students to the rhetoric of Affirmative Action or reverse discrimination from the White students they attend class with (Iverson, 2007). Although the largest benefits accrued to Whites, the institution and departments in terms of financial gains, cross-cultural competence and attractiveness, what is missing from this discourse is the voice of high achieving minority students who actually build the structural diversity at university and college campuses across the nation. These students are subjugated to racist views of their presence and their ability to compete with their classmates on equal footing. What follows next is the reality of what urban student experience against the backdrop of institutional diversity rhetoric at a rural PWI.

*Stereotype Threat, Racial Microaggressions and Achievement*

Now more than ever researchers have examined campus climate, race and the effects of racial microaggressions on formally educated African Americans (Allen, 1992; D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado et al., 1998; Inwood & Yarbrough, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003; Solórzano et al., 2001; Solórzano &
Villalpando, 1998). This body of research offers insight into how racial/ethnic minorities understand race and racism at PWIs and the issues they contend with while being part of the minority population.

Researchers in the field of sociology and psychology contend that although racial microaggressions can be subtle and insignificant, the affects are dramatic (Steele et al., 2002). According to Sue et al. (2007), there is a critical need to bring attention and understanding to ways racial microaggressions manifest themselves, the impact these manifestations have on people of color and the educational approach needed to eradicate them. A review of the extant literature on the explicit and implicit subtle forms of racism describes racial microaggressions in its everyday form as “subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are ‘putdowns’” (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1978, p.66). In a similar vein scholars in the field of CRT describe racial microaggressions as subtle insults aimed at people of color in the form of verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual assaults which are often unconsciously or automatically enacted (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano et al., 2001).

For Blacks attending PWIs, these subtle acts of racial microaggressions can materialize through language/tone, subtle looks, gestures and covert and overt behaviors. In fact, these exchanges are so insidious and routine in everyday banter that research participants dismissed these acts as others “unconsciously trying to help their own [White] kind” (Eve, personal communication, May 12, 2011). When participants discussed the racial climate on campus they characterized White faculty, staff and students as “open,” “cool” (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011) and “helpful”
(Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011); yet their collective narratives paint a different picture. In an attempt not to identify these subtle acts as racism, participants inadvertently talked about trying not to appear hypersensitive to issues of race.

As participants glossed over these subtle acts, the researcher found this unsettling, especially since students were quick to discuss the physiological and psychological toll of attending a rural PWI. After probing participants about racial stereotypes related to being Black and urban in the context of a rural PWI, the jovial nature of participants faded. The reaction of participants concerning the racial campus climate ranged from “ignoring” (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011), “adjusting” (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011) and “assimilating” (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011) to the immediate environment. In fact, female participants described the dynamic processes of White student, faculty and staff interactions as “draining” and “tiring” (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011), while simultaneously working not to appear to be the “controlling or aggressive angry…Black woman” (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011). Other students, namely males, responded to the racial campus climate by “avoiding certain situations,” while not appearing to be the “aggressive or hostile or confrontational man” (Akeem, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

The work of Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson (1995) suggests that threats related to Black stereotypes are found in the air, much like racism is found profoundly woven into the fabric of U.S. society (Bell, 1992). Since Steele and Aronson (1995) suggest the daily effects of racial microaggressions and stereotype threat are often
misunderstood and difficult to detect, this section utilizes these frameworks to examine the extent to which these subtle acts take place in a rural PWI, to examine the racial weight that Blacks experience from these subtle oppressive acts and how it affects student achievement.

Research suggests that racial composition of college environments affect student experiences and outcomes (Allen, 1992; Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984). A significant amount of this research has focused on Blacks at PWIs, their interactions with Whites and the climate it produces (Ancis et al., 2000; D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado et al., 1998; Solórzano et al., 2001). In attempting to move past structural diversity to a more critical view of diversity, it is important to examine the next steps of what happens once urban Blacks enroll at rural PWIs. Hence, the importance of student perspectives in understanding the formation of the racial campus climate when interacting with the larger campus community.

A lot of people there have never seen Black people before and their idea of Black people is what they see on TV. So you’re coming in and you have to break stereotypes that they have of Blacks. If they only know TV, then the women has maybe five kids, is on welfare, has an outrageous hair style and long nails, and she’s loud and obnoxious. The men are in jail or they’re thugs and involved in gangs…When you’re in class and if it’s a small class you really get it. The first thing they [Whites] would do is look my hair, my clothes and at my shoes. And every time I would speak I would tell them this is my opinion. I am not speaking for the whole Black community. That’s what I would have to say so they would understand that everybody may not think like I do. That was the worse and if any talk about African American anything would come up, people would look at me like oh my God, what is she going to say? (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011).

Abigail noted that by being affiliated with a group of racial minorities she is often placed in a position where she is perceived by her White peers to represent the entire
race. Steele and Aronson (1995) refer to this as spokesperson pressure. In the educational context stereotype threat presents itself with many fronts. For Abigail, threats associated with race and gender was most prominent during her classroom interactions. Her reaction to these threats involved a demystification process of sorts where she informally educated her White peers that Blackness is not monolithic. Aqbar discussed a similar stereotype of Black male athletes. After arriving to the university, his peers assumed he was either part of the football team, or trying out for the football team. He experienced the same assumptions by neighborhood acquaintances when he returned home to his urban community. Similar to Abigail, Aqbar demystified Black male athletic stereotypes by explicitly and informally educating those who assumed he played football at the university.

When I tell them no they would ask why and I have to tell them I have an academic scholarship. So my focus is on the books…Nine times out of ten, if you are in college and you do come from the [urban] hood you got there solely on your athletic ability. It’s not really common for people who come from those areas to be in college. Well it’s not really common for males who come from areas like that to be in school and on an academic scholarship (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011).

Data analysis suggests that Aqbar is confronted with stereotypes associated with race and the performance of male masculinity. It is critical to note that Aqbar carries a massive weight of approximately two hundred and fifty pounds, which resembles the muscular build of an athletic male. Although Aqbar participated in sports during high school, when he began thinking about postsecondary education, he abandoned sports to focus on college readiness skills. He attended the Urban Preparatory Academy and stopped playing football in the 9th grade since he felt the school failed to prepare him
academically. According to Aqbar, “I wasn’t learning anything…by the time I got to college I was going to be so far behind academically that I wasn’t going to be able to catch up. So I made the decision to leave this school and went to another school in the district” (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011). As Aqbar interacted with his peers, he presented with salient identity markers associated with race and gender (masculinity) and affirmed that people were “shocked” (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011) to discover he attended the university on an academic versus an athletic scholarship. His narrative suggests that urban Black males are as concerned about their academic and scholarly development and college readiness skills more so than the perceived threat in the atmosphere indicates. Interactions with peers, for Akeem, yielded stereotypes associates with his geographical urban location.

I really think it’s sad because a lot of people don’t take the time out to get to know us. They [Whites] are just going off of what they think or what stereotypes exists about urban students or Black students in general. It really hurts my feelings because I only wanted to come to college to get a degree like anyone else so that I could have better job security or improve my life. When you get here and see things like that or hear things like that it’s kind of like DAMN!...It’s already hard enough being here. You not making it any better. You don’t even know us. You probably don’t know an Urban Scholar (Akeem, personal communication, April 15, 2011).

Not only do students like Akeem, grapple with stereotypes related to race, space and place, but they also deal with the isolation and alienation that accompany these stereotypes. It is important to note here, how the isolation experienced in the university context mimics the constraints imposed on Blacks in the urban context - leaving urban students to experience isolation and constraints in both socio-spatial environments.

According to Stephanie, the initial geographical transition from an urban to rural area was
“captivating” (Stephanie, personal communication, May 6, 2011), but not enough to overshadow the feeling of isolation, as expressed by Akeem.

I really love the campus because I’ve grown up in the inner-city where there’s just buildings, buildings, buildings. When I first came here [OU] to visit just the scenery of the campus was so different since I’d never been anywhere that was small and country. There’s no mall in sight here and if you want to go to the mall you either have to go to West Virginia or you have to go to Columbus. Just being able to sit out on the green and to be under a tree or just feel the wind and the trees, it just caught my eye. It just brought a peace to me that I’ve never felt before when I first got here…but sometimes the trees and the wind aren’t enough to get me through the day (Stephanie, personal communication, May 6, 2011).

Akeem and Stephanie’s narrative highlight the difficulty associated with racial (i.e. Black) and cultural (i.e. urban) stereotypes. A collective view of the urban Black experience at a rural PWI speaks to how social and cultural stereotypes are exacerbated by geographical locations. The extant literature fails to address how the intersectionality of these specific variables related to socio-spatial places (i.e. campus climate, interactional diversity) impact student achievement at the postsecondary level.

It’s kind of rough but it wasn’t so bad for me because the first school I went to was an International Elementary School. I was used to being around different kinds of people…It was rough being on a campus where you might see one or two of you in class. I think the classroom is where it’s the hardest because people aren’t comfortable talking to some Black students or minority students. They’re not quick to want to work in your group together and you kind of feel alone in a classroom. Because I went from seeing people who look like me everyday [in an urban environment] - to me being the only person [of color] in a class. And it can be troubling (Akeem, personal communication, May 12, 2011).

Akeem’s narrative hints at negative racial stereotypes associated with the socio-cultural group of urban Blacks and low peer expectations related to academic performance. This is significant since university classrooms are social microcosms of society where learning occurs, where various forms of capital (i.e. social, cultural,
intellectual, networking, navigational) are exchanged and where networking and connections are made. These classroom interactions suggest that threats related to race, gender and geographical locations are part of the institutional culture and systemic organizational nature of the university classrooms. This should not be surprising since classrooms are microcosms of the larger society where prejudice, acts of discrimination and/or oppression is evident.

The framework of racial stereotype threat suggests that Aqbar and Akeem’s awareness of stereotypes associated with urban Black underachievement would impact classroom performance negatively. In the context of a rural PWI, high achieving urban Blacks would be most vulnerable to the harmful consequences of academic underachievement. According to Steele (1997), when actors, or the one experiencing the threat, receives environmental clues that confirm the threat, this increases the frustration level, calls for more psychological resources to counter the threat and leaves less resources for classroom performance. For instance, an examination of GPAs among research participants indicate that out of ten participants, Aqbar ranked 10th with the lowest grade point average of a 2.5, indicating that 100% of research participants out performed him academically. Akeem ranked 8th out of research participants with 80% out performing him academically. He presented with a 2.8 GPA. Although university and scholarship requirements categorize Urban Scholars as high achieving students, data indicate that many struggle to maintain the academic scholarship requirement of a 2.5 GPA once they began matriculation. In fact, data analysis indicate that Urban Scholars have the lowest cumulative GPA when compared to other scholarships program
recipients at OU for multicultural students (i.e. Appalachian, Templeton Scholars) (Ohio University, 2011f). When asked about the rationale for the low GPA requirement for Urban Scholars Calvin explained:

I know there is this belief out there that in order to achieve diversity, universities in particular have to compromise their standards. I’ve heard people say it as well and understand that there is this belief out there to do so. There is a little bit of truth in that because students who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds which has a strong correlation with race, tend to be underprepared for college. They come to college with more academic challenges that they have to overcome. Therefore in order to promote the kind of racial and ethnic diversity that you want on your campus, you sometimes do have to take into consideration the academic preparation of those students. Now, I believe that is a bit of a cop-out because there are good students out there who are underrepresented in the racial and ethnic minority populations, but you just have to work harder to provide them with some of the resources they may need to be successful. That requires some attention to the climate on campus. That requires attention to creating the kind of community they need in order to be successful or that they want to find on a college campus that often mirrors what they had at home (Calvin, personal communication, June 28, 2011).

Calvin suggests that students from low income areas tend to lack college readiness skills when they begin matriculating. This statement is supported by Aqbar’s narrative illustrating why he left one urban school in search of better educational opportunities to prepare him for college. The researcher argues, here, that postsecondary institutions absorb the educational mishaps of urban secondary schools and their lack of robustness in preparing urban students for postsecondary education. This is further evidenced through urban school organizational practices such as, curriculum tracking, per pupil expenditures and de facto segregation.

By and large, these educational practices at the secondary level leave urban Blacks academically underprepared at the postsecondary level. Interestingly, at the postsecondary level, research participants were considered academically talented as
indicated by standardized test scores, GPA and class rank - all criteria needed to meet university admission and scholarship requirements. For instance, Christopher attended a private school and presented with a college GPA of 2.9 at the time of the interview; Aqbar had been enrolled in the “gifted and talented program since I was in the first grade” (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011) and had a college GPA of 2.5 at the time of the interview; Angel, graduated as the high school salutatorian, with a college GPA of 2.6; Eve attended a college preparatory high school and had a college GPA of 2.9 at the time of the interview; and Cee Cee attended an affluent high school with a liberal curriculum, and presented with a college GPA of 2.9.

These academic discrepancies between secondary and postsecondary performance, as evidenced by student data and noted by Steele (1992), persist into postsecondary education making the academic gap more visible and more likely to be exacerbated in the competitive educational market of higher education. These discrepancies produce long term academic effects for urban students when transitioning between different socio-spaces with different ideals related to student achievement. Collectively, student narratives suggests that academic achievement is impacted by the level of preparation at the secondary level, the lack of interactional diversity that urban Blacks had with White’s in the urban environment, the lack of interactional diversity that White’s have with Blacks in a rural environment and the prevalence of stereotype threats in the atmosphere. If this statement holds true and racial and ethnic stereotypes remain one of the most pressing issues for high achieving urban Blacks in the classroom, a closer look at its affects on academic achievement are necessary.
Research in the area of stereotype threat addresses the academic experiences of Blacks in the classroom (Steele, 1992; Steel, 1997; Steele, 1999; Steele, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 2004). When asked about her academic and social experiences on campus related to stereotypes Karmah explained that she worked hard to prove herself in the confines of the classroom.

I’m a Business student and in the College of Business they stress group work. You work in groups a lot and I guess sometime I feel like my intelligence is questioned or I’m last to be in a group. I feel like I have to work extra hard or prove myself or prove my qualifications extra hard just to feel like I’m deserving of being in that group or that they should have me in that group…So what I have to do is just prove to them that I am capable (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011).

As part of Karmah’s interactive classroom experience she was compelled to prove her academic/ intellectual ability with the assumption that her peers deemed she was not smart enough for academic work associated with course requirements. In this narrative there is a high probability that the need to prove academic ability was negatively correlated with being a woman in a male dominated industry and/or identifying as an African American. In the classroom Karmah presented with the double bind and stereotype threat of being a double minority (i.e. gender, race/ethnicity).

As students interacted with peers in and outside of academic spaces (i.e. classroom), they voiced frustration at how the intersections of race/ethnicity, gender and geographical location affected the construction of their overall social identity. Collectively they responded by demystifying racial stereotypes, proving others wrong and educating their White peers about the value they place on getting a quality education despite the threat in the atmosphere that Blacks do not value education. On a macro-level
(i.e. university standards, Urban Scholars Scholarship requirements) participants were considered high academic achievers; however, on a micro level, an analysis of data revealed that threats and stereotypes germane to Black culture and Black underachievement is present in the classroom and emanates from White students and faculty alike.

We had to do presentations and a lot of times [White] students or professors would be like you were able to articulate so well. And it’s like what did you expect me to stand up here and sound like? You expected me to be poppin’ my lips? I mean what did you expect? I mean it got really irritating and I think a lot of times people will see in the media how Black women are suppose to behave and so that’s how they expect you to be…I think a few times when we were working in groups, I felt I had to perform more than anyone else in the group because they were already expecting me to be lazy. A lot of times they would try to give me the little tasks to complete. And I’m like No. I’m bigger than that. I don’t need to complete the little tasks. It wasn’t even so much the students, but I had a lot of issues with faculty and staff (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011).

Angel, a former Urban Scholar, spoke candidly about her classroom experiences and singled out White faculty and staff as culprits who hold fast to Black underachievement stereotypes. In fact, Angel is the same student who was told by a faculty member in the Department of Music, “I don’t think this is cut out for you and I think you should go back to community college because I think that may be where you might do better” (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011). Resultantly, Angel found herself stagnating in the Music program only to discover her admission was based upon fraudulent and deceptive departmental activities of needing a minority quota to secure additional funds.

Collectively, student narratives illustrate that predetermined, negative stereotypes that Whites bring to their minimal interactions with urban Blacks effects the academic
performance of urban students. In many ways these negative interactions between urban Blacks and their White counterparts (i.e. students, faculty) act as structural barriers that impede their educational progress. Examples of racial microaggressions were noted within the classroom setting, with peers and faculty-student interactions, where both parties maintained low expectations of urban student. Several of the research participants indicated that being part of structural diversity (i.e. numerical) yielded very personal consequences. A study conducted by Ancis et al. (2000) found that faculty members assessed the classroom and academic performance of Blacks more harshly and negatively when compared to White students. This study is particularly important since educators have the ability to leverage behaviors (i.e. cognitive, academic, social) that students bring into the classroom setting towards their achievement, and minimize and/ or remove threats in the classroom. To control for this type climate in the classroom, the researcher suggests that educators broaden their educational practices to fully develop students socially and academically.

Although research participants had no agreed upon definition of true measures of achievement, an analysis of data indicated not all students learn in the same way, hence measurements of achievement should reflect this. When asked about alternate ways to measure achievement in the classroom, Jasmine discussed the lack of malleability in current assessment practices, the difficulty of obtaining a true measure of achievement based upon these practices, the overall affect it had on her academic performance and how she responded physiologically.

I think because they [Whites] have become so accustomed to it being that way, they don’t really see or think of ways of doing something different. They think
that’s all there is, that’s how things should be, that’s how they are supposed to be and so they don’t really question it. A student can test very poorly, but when it comes to their academic work, they can be a 4.0 student. The anxiety of having to take a test and to know that these tests scores could potentially determine whether or not I get into college or these scores determine whether I get into grad school, it’s a lot of pressure that has been based on these scores. That puts a lot of stress upon people…I experience it [anxiety] all the time. I experienced it when I took the praxis…I was just nervous and just kept thinking I have to get this score and I need to get my license in order for me to teach. I can’t teach unless I pass this test. I can’t get into grad school unless I get this score. That really put a lot of pressure on me because I had to make sure I forced myself to study really hard in order for me to get into grad school (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011).

Jasmine’s response hinted at the possibility of multiple forms of intelligence (Gardner, 1983) and the difficulty associated with obtaining true measures of achievement. In fact, she believed that White faculty brought their own cultural beliefs and biases into the classroom and it is through this cultural standpoint that they assess students’ intellectual abilities, their potential for academic achievement and determine their educational path based upon these measures. According to Gardner (1983), there are multiple intelligences that extend beyond the standard pencil and paper exams meant to predict measures of school success. Gardner (1999) characterizes intelligence as the “potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture” (pp. 33-34). Contrary to the how university professors assess student achievement in this study, Gardner (1999) differentiates between the one dimensional view of brain based intelligence, used to typically measure student success, and the importance of culture in shaping multiple intelligence. “My intelligence does not stop at my skin,” (Gardner, 1983, pg. xiii) writes Gardner (1983), rather, the author argues
It encompasses my tools (paper, pencil, computer), my notational memory (contained in files, notebooks, journals), and my network of associates (office mates, professional colleagues, others whom I can phone or to whom I can dispatch electronic messages) (Gardner, 1983, p. xiii).

For almost four decades, Gardner (1983) has conducted extensive research, advocating for multiple intelligence in relation to culture; however, data from the current study indicated that instead of achievement being viewed in relation to culture, it is viewed in the traditional Eurocentric model of education, which has a long standing history of measuring achievement based on psychometrics testing (i.e. cognitive ability) (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). While researchers posit that race is a social construct (Banks, 2009; Ferguson 2000; Fordham, 1996; Omi & Winant, 1994; Spring, 2007) military research suggests that intelligence is also a social construct (Rury, 1988). For instance, in 1917 the U.S. Army conducted standardized test, later referred to as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Quotient Test, which identified variations in performance based upon social groups (Rury, 1988). According to Rury (1988), results from this study were interpreted as White intellectual superiority that omitted regional and contextual factors (Rury, 1988). In a later study, researchers discovered the median scores for northern Blacks in the Army were higher than median scores for southern Whites, with differences attributed to “better socio-economic conditions” for northerners (Montague, as cited in Rury, 1988, p. 52).

Further evidence that race is a factor in gauging intellectual ability is found in smoke screen assessments associated with entrance exams in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs (e.g. Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), Graduate Record Examination (GRE), Law School Admission Test (LSAT), Medical College
Admission Test (MCAT)). The researcher argues these various forms of assessment measures are smoke screen tactics used for admission and selection processes. Since these assessments give the impression that several criteria are used for admission purposes, when in fact, it is a one dimensional view of filtering out unlikely candidates based upon cognitive ability. Cee Cee discussed her experience with coaxing a friend to address issues related to achievement after taking the GRE.

I had a friend who was applying for assistantships and she took the GRE. The minimum score was a 900 and she got a 6 something. When I helped her write her letter, I told her - you need to tell them not to base whether or not you can perform off of your GRE because that’s not reflective of who you are (Cee Cee, personal communication, May 4, 2011).

An analysis of data suggests that Black achievement is not the issue, but rather it is the abject failure of schools, universities and academic departments to adopt and reward a larger set of cultural values and behaviors related to achievement in the context of the classroom. To indicate the importance of viewing achievement in the context of culture, Cee Cee explained

Like a lot of people you go in there and take these tests. You’re sweaty and you stayed up. We drink coffee. We’re taking adderall and whatever we need to take to stay up and try to focus. That’s like really messing with our minds. So by the time I go to work and take test after I get off work after staying up all night you think I’m about to get a “A”? Like that’s not going to show you what I know. If you evaluate how I’m doing over the quarter, how I’m contributing in the class, and if you have a conversation with me you’ll get a better idea. You can’t be a professor and have two hundred plus students in class and know every single person…It’s just very difficult for you to go based off scantron [sheets] and my grades (Cee Cee , personal communication, May 4, 2011).

Cee Cee’s insight into measures of achievement is incongruent with the traditional Eurocentric measure of achievement (i.e. individualistic competition), rather it presents with undertones of cultural themes related to use of language and the communal
nature of storytelling, a practice commonly found in the cultural experiences of Blacks (Boykin et al., 2005). Cee Cee’s cultural standpoint related to achievement is confirmed by research from Boykin et al. (2005), who suggests early on that Whites and Blacks have very different orientations of what achievement looks like and what it means. Results from this study suggested that Black students were considerably more accommodating of peers who demonstrated “communalism and verve” (p. 344) and who were high achievers when compared to White students. On the other hand, White students favored “individual and competitive” (p. 345) high achieving peers more than their Black counterparts.

Cee Cee’s narrative illustrated the genuine concern she had for achievement and her preference for assessment measures that lend themselves to capturing the cultural aspect of achievement (i.e. language usage), as noted by Gardner (1999). In the context of a rural PWI where educational practices lend themselves to mainstream measures of achievement, urban Black students should be aware of and master the rules that govern achievement and the classroom. Although students offered alternative suggestions to measure achievement (i.e. dialogue, discussion) it is evident that traditional measures of achievement are embedded deeply in American educational practices and students who do not master these skills are sanctioned. However, this does not negate the fact that educators should consider the theory of multiple intelligences among students and adapt curriculum and instruction to reflect these multiple differences. Understanding and adapting curriculum and instruction to maximize student performance is an essential part of an educator’s role. Although Gardner’s (1999) concept of multiple intelligences may
be universally understood, the interpretation of multiple intelligences is relative to context and specific environmental situations that vary from student to student.

As student narratives have indicated, urban students favor assessments that lend themselves to building upon their strengths versus highlighting their weaknesses. If this is the case and learners present with different learning styles and intelligences, educators must make a conscious decision to determine which adaptations to curriculum and instruction should be made in urban academic and social spaces to highlight the academic strengths of urban students. This would involve an adaptation of the curriculum to reflect the communal and cultural component of multiple intelligences (i.e. group projects, oral presentations, experiential learning). By differentiating instruction, this pedagogy would provide urban learners with a variety of ways to process information presented in the classroom and the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned. Furthermore, by adapting curriculum and instructions, which is applicable to any course content, Gardner’s (1999) theory of multiple intelligence would give urban schools educators an opportunity to understand students who fall outside of the traditional achievement paradigm, and raise the level of consciousness in pedagogical practices. Finally, this adaptation speaks to the importance of professional development for urban school educators who should be more aware of and reflect on the power of pedagogy and the multiple interactions that occur between students and educators.

Aqbar, who suggested alternate ways to measure classroom performance, discussed how context shaped his perception of achievement.

There aren’t a lot of examples of [Black] people who have gone to college. The majority of us who do go into higher education don’t necessarily achieve or
become successful the way that society determines success. The way I was raised was to take pride in what you do or let your work in your field be the way you show your achievement and not so much your pay rate or the status of your job, but how you carry out that job... A lot of the professors here use standardized testing methods. And because some people don't perform well on test, that doesn't necessarily mean that if given the material in a different way that they wouldn't be able to perform or demonstrate their understanding of the material. I think that standardized testing captures only one learning style. Some people are physical learners. Some people are visual learners. Some people are auditory learners. So standardized testing or GPA only represent that you understand and learn the system and know how to benefit from it. Being smart or intelligent is something that is different. It is a difference between smart and being wise or having wisdom. I think that in order to function at a high level you have to have a good mesh of both (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011).

As expected, Aqbar's orientation to achievement is correlated to culture. This is consistent with Gardner's (1999) definition of multiple intelligences and the potential to process and activate information relative to a cultural setting. This narrative further indicated that urban Blacks advocate for achievement to be understood in a cultural context. In a similar vein, Christopher discussed the role that stereotypes played in White perception of Black underachievement.

I feel like a lot of the White students who aren't from major cities don't see a whole lot of Black people. Because of that their idea of how Black people act is skewed... There's still interaction but you still have these preconceived notions and for a lot of people those notions stay there until they are expressly proven wrong on a consistent basis... Whether or not professors are able to accurately determine how well I learn or not I think that's the whole institutional idea - of grading and testing someone's knowledge in a singular currents. But having said that, I don't think standardized test are the best way. I don't have a better suggestion... but a lot of my tests just ask me about specific material. You didn't ask me to apply it often times (Christopher, personal communication, May 2, 2011).

Both Aqbar and Christopher's narratives support Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences. Although both used laymen terminology to illustrate alternative measures of achievement, this further emphasized an awareness of the incompatibility
between what they value culturally and the values espoused by mainstream educational systems. According to Steele and Aronson (2004), the utility of stereotype threat and multiple intelligences, as a collective and historical framework for understanding achievement draw attention to why African Americans perform poorer than their White counterparts in the same contextual confines of standardized testing (Steele & Aronson, 2004). Steele (1992) posits that Blacks and Whites begin primary school with similar test scores; however, the longer they stay in school the achievement gap widens. Furthermore, Steele (1997) suggests that at each level of schooling (e.g. primary, secondary, postsecondary, graduate) the stereotype threat affects the vanguard of high performing students who have innovative ideas. Furthermore, Tuitt and Carter (2008) suggests that the nature of atmospheric threats draw attention to the psychological strains imposed on Black students who are daily recipient of these subtle offenses.

In theory, much of the literature looks at atmospheric threats and racialized microaggressions as two distinct constructs; however, the researcher suggests that the two are similar since they simultaneously work to obstruct the academic progress and social interactions of student in and outside of the classroom. What seems less clear is the role that institutional structures (i.e. OMSAR, MCC) play in countering these barriers. To understand this phenomenon, the section that follows examines watershed moments for urban students attending a rural PWI.
The Watershed: Shelter from the Storm

Watershed concepts are most familiar in the discipline of Geography. As defined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, 1996) once people are made aware and become interested in their watersheds they become more involved in decision-making as well as hands-on protection and restoration efforts. Through such involvement, watershed approaches build a sense of community, help reduce conflicts, increase commitment to the actions necessary to meet environmental goals, and ultimately, improve the likelihood of success for environmental programs (EPA, 1996, para.8).

In this study, watershed moments are metaphorically used to denote areas or places where Black students gravitate to build community and seek respite from and adjust psychosocially to the larger unwelcoming community. Although a number of studies have examined Black students’ perceptions concerning their experiences in higher education (Allen, 1992; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Fleming, 1984; Feagin et al., 1996; Gossett et al., 1998; Sedlacek, 1987; Sedlacek, 1999; Taylor & Olswang, 1997) research in this area lacks the breadth necessary to compare and contrast the individual and institutional effects once the two converge. Furthermore, this body of literature fails to investigate the power and privilege paradigm that assists in creating counterspaces apart from the larger campus community.

Through state, federal and local initiatives, higher education has attempted to minimize the challenges that Black students face in high education (Gladieux, 2004; Gladieux et al., 2005); however, a review of the literature shows that Blacks attending PWIs continue to feel isolated (Ancis et al., 2000; Booker, 2007; Davis et al., 2004; Gossett et al., 1998; Taylor & Olswang, 1997), classify PWIs as hostile, unsupportive,
unsympathetic and unwelcoming spaces and places (Allen, 1992; Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984), where they experience much discomfort and stress (Allen, 1992; Boykin & Jones, 2004; Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984; Gossett et al., 1998; Taylor & Olswang, 1997). Themes from these studies suggest that once Blacks begin matriculation at PWIs, they become part of an environment where multiplicities of factors weigh on their overall psychosocial development.

In reaction to an increased number of students of color enrolling in postsecondary institutions, accommodations have been made at universities to make adequate provisions for traditionally underrepresented students (ACE, 2011; Altbach, 2005; Bowen et al., 2005). Specific to OU, institutional structures that support multicultural student matriculation and retention include OMSAR and the MCC. These offices aim to (1) validate and assist multicultural students with resources (e.g. financial, community) and various forms of capital to aid in their psychosocial adjustment to the university, (2) mitigate social and academic isolation and (3) serve as a physical space and place where multicultural students feel a sense of belongingness and mattering (Evan et al., 2000) where multicultural values can be expressed openly and without restraint. Aside from the flowery rhetoric that bellows from postsecondary institutions concerning the benefits of a diverse student body, solutions to the proposed challenges are far from being resolved.

Rarely does reality meet the expectation of the rhetoric. I think the biggest challenge is living up to the expectations that the rhetoric sets forth. We talk beautifully about how this [diversity] is important and how we need to do this and how we are going to do this and so on and so forth, and then you’ve got to go out and make it happen. It’s much easier said than done, especially when you’ve got limited to no resources. Yet, you’ve been out pronouncing this flowery rhetoric that doesn’t necessarily have teeth to make it happen. So I think the biggest challenge is really bringing to two together - making the rhetoric and the reality
align. Unfortunately, what often doesn’t align is the reality with the rhetoric, instead of making the rhetoric align with the reality (Calvin, personal communication, June 28, 2011).

Calvin, a university administrator, recognized that an increased presence and absorption of diverse students in higher education (i.e. Blacks) has not been a simple matter, especially in the contextual confines of a rural PWI. While higher education has moved from a massive to universal system of education and propagates equal access and educational opportunities (Thelin, 2004), it has grown more racially diverse and complex (Astin, 1985). Specific to this study and despite the different educational trajectories and disparities between urban Black students and their White counterparts (i.e. academically, socially, financially) participants in this study continued to persist despite facing a unique set of challenges (Tinto, 1993) while adjusting to a rural PWI.

Research participants indicated the key to countering and balancing negative assumptions associated with the urban habitus was found during watershed moments of joining with others who shared similar cultural values and interest. When asked about watershed moments during their pre-matriculation experience, students noted variations in the pre-matriculation phase when compared to their actual enrollment/matriculation. Students perceived pre-matriculation was a “big lie” (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011) and they were “tricked,” (Aqbar, personal communication, April 29, 2011). Aqbar explained:

Cultural Connections is on a weekend so a lot of students aren’t really on campus during that weekend. Most of the people that you see are like people who are of ethnic descent or like multicultural students. It’s almost like a trick, but when you come down…and register for all your classes that’s when you see what the face of the university really looks like. During pre-college there was only a hand full of multicultural students, or Black students. I always say that this university is a real
good sample size of what the real world looks like - predominantly White! I mean you do have some representation of other minority groups, but it’s not big at all, and the higher up you go into the university status, the fewer and fewer people you see that look like you (Aqbar, personal communication, May 29, 2011).

During LINKS pre-matriculation Aqbar was surrounded by multicultural students; however, once his matriculation began, he felt he received partial and/or inaccurate information about the demographic make-up of the university. The underlying principle of the OMSAR office, where the LINKS pre-matriculation program emanates, is to increase retention rates of multicultural students by providing them with as many “campus resources as possible” (Evelyn, personal communication, May 18, 2011); however, the office’s retention efforts should expand beyond the exchange of capital - that is accruing and transferring social and cultural capital. Rather, it should include a transparency of alerting students to the various types of insensitivity they may encounter from their White counterparts.

According to Angel, the LINKS program provided them with campus resources, but it did not “prepare us for there no being any other Brown skin people in the room” (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011). To enhance the chances of student success, engagement and retention, programs like LINKS play a critical role in equipping urban Black students with navigational capital; however, it is equally important that students are informed about potential structural and institutional barriers they may encounter during matriculation. Angel’s narrative bears this out as she explained how she experienced self-doubt in the perception of being inaccurately perceived as less intelligent than her White counterparts. In response to the perceived atmospheric threats, Angel grappled with “not wanting to speak in class,” (Angel, personal communication,
May 7, 2011) and disengaging from the learning environment, or using linguistic capital to access intellectual capital in the context of the classroom. As a result of the frustration, Angel stated, “there were a few times where I began to fill out transfer papers” (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011). This data further highlights the need for LINKS to develop a comprehensive curriculum that address the impact that internal and external factors have on student success and engagement in the classroom, as well as explicitly addressing macro institutional barriers that impede student progress.

Jasmine saw the LINKS pre-matriculation program as a clearing house of sorts where multicultural students filtered through and received campus resources, but more importantly she perceived the program to be a watershed for the exchange of social capital and networking with other multicultural students.

Pre-matriculation was good because afterwards if you walked to class you wouldn’t see anybody that looked like you. But with the Black community being so small, everybody knew everybody. That gave me a sense of belonging and security around campus. Your freshman year you’re always in these big pre-requisite classes and when you see another individual that looks like you in the class, you knew them and knew you guys could study together. It [pre-matriculation] built that bond and helped me make those transitions as far as the classrooms and being around campus. They (pre-matriculation staff) told us at the time it was around twenty thousand students and of those only about less than 5% were African Americans. I don’t know if it was LINKS or something where they gave those sort of statistics. It was brought to our attention like Look! It’s not that many of us here (Jasmine, personal communication, June 10, 2011).

To confirm Jasmine’s perception, Abigail noted the importance of critical mass and finding other students of color for academic and social support. This support, according to Abigail, was found in the MCC, which she discussed as if having personal ownership. “We felt like it [multicultural center] was ours...I was able to relax and be free for the most part” (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011).
Although students view OMSAR, LINKS and the MCC structures as watershed places where valuable information is accrued, the researcher argues that greater benefits would accrue to urban Blacks if a more comprehensive curriculum were implemented, beyond the focus of structural diversity (i.e. numbers) and the exchange of social and navigational capital. This proactive stance for these 3 university infrastructures would prepare urban Blacks for the realization of the institutional culture and the perceived and actual campus climate. This expansive educational component would also bring a level of awareness that is truly student-centered and build pathways that are crucial to student success. As indicated by student narratives, exposure to diverse populations rarely occurs in the classroom confines at a rural PWI, hence the importance of an educational component that addresses interactional diversity during the LINKS pre-matriculation program. This would allow dialogue whereby urban students consider the importance of campus resources, structural and institutional barriers, and the impact these variable have on student engagement, persistence and cognitive and non-cognitive learning outcomes (e.g. intellectual contributions, self-confidence, aspirations).

In fact, all faculty and students in the campus community could benefit from learning about interactional diversity in academic and social programming and pre-matriculation programs. It is important to point out, however, that interactions should aim to educate all students. This would develop a symbiotic relationship that links urban students to the university community, and links the university community to urban students. If the university continues to focus on structural diversity as a priority, while interactional diversity becomes insignificant, the campus climate relative to cross-
cultural, interpersonal, academic and social interactions will be difficult to assess, due to the rapidly changing demographic nature of higher education. By addressing these variables, acknowledging the real and perceived experiences of urban Blacks, the institution could narrow the rhetoric versus reality diversity gap and create a climate where all members of the university community, including urban Blacks, experience an inclusive, affirming and welcoming environment.
Chapter 8: Streams of Consciousness: Conclusions and Discussions

This qualitative study explored the complicated array of academic, social, cultural and personal factors that successful African American students faced while attending a rural PWI. Specifically, the researcher sought to understand the co-curricular experiences of urban Blacks who transitioned to a rural predominately White environment. Ten Urban Scholars were interviewed and a CRT lens was employed to investigate their experiences.

The goals of this study were as follows: (1) to determine how Urban Scholars perceived their co-curricular achievement as it related to their college matriculation; (2) to determine the role that race, culture and gender played in their concept of achievement and (3) to illuminate the experiences of former Urban Scholars. An analysis of data indicated that four themes emerged which reflected student’s perspectives of their experiences as Urban Scholars at a rural PWI: (1) the castaways, (2) capital one rewards, (3) reducing toxic threats and (4) the alien among us. With a focus on space and place, this study highlighted the nuances of the schooling and educational processes of urban Blacks and how they navigated higher education from their own perspective. Results from this study not only substantiate the differential impact of race-related college experiences for urban youth but it also serves as a springboard for continual research in this area. The researcher is unaware of any other studies that have explored the impact that space and place has on urban students transitioning to a rural PWI. Given societal demographic shifts and minority enrollment trends taking place in higher education, this research serves to assist high school guidance counselors, campus leaders, student affairs
personnel, multicultural centers and retention offices and units who support diversity initiatives and institutions who aim to create a campus climate of inclusion. Many factors contributed to the overall social and academic experiences of the Urban Scholar. This chapter seeks to add greater depth to the emerging themes found in chapters 4 through 7.

**Results of Research Question One**

How do Urban Scholars, at Ohio University, perceive or understand their own co-curricular achievement as it relates to their college matriculation?

*Theme: “The Castaways” and “Capital One Rewards”*

When White campuses were mandated to open their doors to cultural, racial and class outsiders they did so with little thought or action to the climate of their institution toward students who present with difference in many forms. With no real change in the Eurocentric model of education, tension between cultures escalated (Solórzano, et al., 2001; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The unchanging nature of PWIs convey the extreme value placed on Whiteness as property and benefits accrued when students endeavoring to navigate through them must closely align with dominate standards to gain access to institutional structures and academic success. For instance, in the context of a rural PWI, when the intersectionality of race, gender, culture and class are considered there appeared to be very different behavioral norms, values and expectation for urban Blacks when compared to the dominant culture.

Results revealed that for urban Black students attending a rural PWI exclusion was based upon salient identity markers of Blackness; however, as students drew upon various forms of capital to minimize structural and institutional barriers (i.e. linguistic,
social, cultural, navigational), their habitus (behavior) was rewarded when it closely aligned with White norms such as linguistic capital/speech patterns, dress and behavioral patterns. An awareness of these experiences may shed light onto ways that race, class, gender and culture has left Black students marginalized and disadvantaged if they lack the knowledge, skills, people resources and capital to successfully navigate rural PWIs. Results further indicate that salient identity markers and the performance of urban Black femininity and masculinity are constructed around race and culture, and are dependent upon context. Next, as urban students work to overcome structural barriers the construction of their social identity is constantly in flux, being constructed and re-constructed. As such, there are times when salient characteristics of race and class serve as structural barriers to gaining access to institutional structures and classroom knowledge (i.e. intellectual capital).

Through the analytical framework of Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995) the positioning of these barriers reinforce and support the hierarchical paradigm of White norms and values that simultaneously work against the grain of building a diverse and inclusive campus culture. An analysis of data clearly indicates that institutional needs are a priority over that of the social and academic experiences of urban Blacks. Due to inadequate support from the university in its entirety, urban students experience a great deal of stress, report perceptions of isolation and have very limited access to institutional structures and programs without drawing upon various forms of capital. This research considered the scope of which students felt they were part of the university campus, including academic, social, racial and cultural inclusiveness. In the context of a rural
PWI, data suggests that students were left feeling alienated and marginalized in and outside of the classroom. Further analysis indicated that Whites, on a micro-level, did not attempt to alleviate barriers for Urban Scholars once they gained financial access to the university. In fact, university faculty and staff (i.e. professors, academic advisors) subtly worked to maintain these structural barriers whereas, attempts to alleviate these structural barriers on a macro level was primarily the responsibility of the recruitment personnel, LINKS pre-matriculation program, OMSAR and school wide diversity initiatives - all of which are positions and/ or institutional structures specifically geared towards the recruitment, retention and persistence of multicultural, minority, underrepresented and/or diverse students.

The disparity between the educational practices on the micro and macro levels not only leaves urban youth experiencing different adjustment periods where they question their ability to achieve in the context of a rural PWI, but it highlights an academic achievement performance gap. For urban youth who are first generation college students, with lower income levels and who have fewer college readiness skills, college knowledge and capital upon matriculation, this troubling academic achievement performance gap signals a failure on the part of secondary and postsecondary institutions they attended. Although there are institutional structures in support of integrating and supporting the recruitment, retention, engagement and success for this cadre of students, on a macro level, the university is seemingly more concerned about the structural diversity (i.e. numbers) whereby leaving a gaping hole for campus climate issues.
Researchers have recommended incorporating critical race perspectives into daily practices within education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Milner, 2008a, Milner, 2008b). By looking into the daily educational practices of institutions and the educational processes of urban youth simultaneously, this will highlight the role that race, culture and gender plays in producing racial inequalities, whereby strengthening hegemonic structures of power and privilege. As a result, faculty, academic advisors and college administrators should be aware of the racial realism (Bell, 1995b) that exists in educational settings and acknowledge the complexities that challenge urban African American students. Reflecting on how PWIs incorporate and infuse racial perspectives throughout institutional policies, educational practices, academic curriculum and diversity and inclusion initiatives is critical to the progress of racial equality in higher education. By closely examining institutional habitus or behaviors of urban youth attending a rural PWI, this is a useful way to garner information concerning student engagement, persistence and success through complete matriculation. Furthermore, it aids our understanding in the way that diversity is conceptualized and the manner in which faculty, staff, students and administrators who encounter diversity respond. For some Urban Scholars, the transition from an urban to rural environment resulted in a cultural shock since this was the first time they were aware of the value of Whiteness and how it worked to impede their educational progress.

According to interviews from campus leaders, the institution aims to embrace and value diversity, and works to respond to the needs of minority student constituents who are traditionally underrepresented. Although structural diversity (i.e. enrollment
numbers) accounts for a one dimensional view of diversity and accrues benefits to the institution by making it more appealing to potential diverse students, interactional diversity draws attention to the schooling processes of students. The specific characteristics that have been identified from this research study related to exclusion and habitus from the student’s perspective were:

- Low faculty and peer expectations which increase the social and academic disparity between parties resulting in the Urban Scholar believing they carried less value and consequently experience less assurance in their ability to achieve academically in the classroom.

- An institutional milieu which does not reward the urban habitus or performance of urban Black femininity and masculinity in the context of a rural PWI. This includes a double awareness of behavioral practices, previous educational experiences, acceptable learning styles and measures of intelligence that limit access to institutional structures.

- Covert penalties for students who exhibit urban habitus manifested through salient identity markers of race, gender and class, and the overt expectation of the need to alter their social identity to fit in with institutional norms that are very different from the urban habitus.

- Depending upon the context, the multiple identities of Urban Scholars continue to be structured and re-structured within and across socio-racial groups. As the social identity is in constant flux, Urban Scholars were able to gain access to institutional structures when their habitus aligned more closely with that of the dominant culture.

- Rigid and narrow academic support with regard to career choice and academic advising. Although academic advising resembled a screening and tracking process similar to that found during their high school experience where gender, geographical location and race affected their curriculum choices, Urban Scholars lacked the skills, ability and social capital (i.e. networking) necessary to counter the negative effects of this in higher education.

A thorough analysis of institutional behaviors among Urban Scholars involves a set of complex behaviors highly influenced by predisposition of the urban geographical habitus. Interestingly, while these behaviors are in constant flux in various contexts,
institutional rhetoric proclaims it is supportive of the broader concept of diversity and inclusion, which includes but is not limited to race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, abilities, geographic regions, and ways of thinking. This suggests it is probable to have an institutional culture that complicates and exacerbates the already formed structural and institutional barriers for urban Blacks, with the institutional culture of OU reinforcing behaviors of the dominant group. In this manner, the researcher argues that the university places a higher value on structural rather than interactional diversity.

Institutional diversity plans are littered with a number of measurable criteria, goals and objectives; however, a problem with measurable variables is what the increase in numbers measure. As indicated by student narratives, an increase in numbers (i.e. quantity) does not guarantee increased acceptance, inclusion and equal access. In fact, regardless of the flowery rhetoric of institutional mission and vision statements and institutional enrollment numbers, urban Blacks in this study affirmed the argument that rural PWIs are unwelcoming places, with regard to interactional diversity, or the quality of intergroup interactions as a key to a meaningful diverse and inclusive experience during their matriculation.

With respect towards mirroring demographic shifts taking place in the larger society, the campus climate of Whiteness and White privilege appears to take precedence and seemingly makes institutional policies and structures related to minority recruitment and retention secondary. Despite the [slow] gains made through organizational structures that support diversity and inclusion initiatives (i.e. multicultural office, student retention office, diversity and inclusion units), significant progress is yet to be made concerning
racial balance throughout the wider campus community. According to student narratives, the current diversity and multicultural initiatives are propelled by the changing make-up of the student body and enrollment numbers. The researcher further suggests that the change is propelled by the inability of the institutions to fully integrate and use a heterogeneous White community at all levels (i.e. administration, faculty, staff, students) to effect organizational change. To this end, improving diversity initiatives should expand to include the institutions readiness to create, institutionalize and sustain organizational structures that support a diverse student body. Unfortunately, the reality that institutions have created mimics a culture that is full of rhetoric when it comes to encouraging interactional diversity.

Although not part of this study, students expressed a great deal of disdain for the administration in the restructuring of offices that support their retention. In fact, a review of documents and institutional data indicate stagnations towards diversity goals and sometimes a lag in the actual efforts to increase the presence of underrepresented minorities on campus (McCoy, 2011; Wagner, 2011). According to reports by McCoy (2011), the reorganization of the multicultural retention office at the university, which began in 2009, has saved the university more than $72,000 at the expense of eliminating 3 positions. Furthermore, Wagner (2011) reports that funding for two of the university’s prominent opportunity scholarships has “dried up” - that is the Appalachian and Urban Scholarship programs. For instance, when the Urban Scholars Scholarship program began in 2005, ten students from urban areas were provided with full academic scholarships. In 2011, this number has decreased to supporting 1 urban student per
academic school year, due to a decrease in funds that have not been replenished (Wagner, 2011).

A rhetorical commitment to institutional values germane to inclusion, coupled with financial strain shows there are multiple factors that impact the organizational structure across various institutional departments and units. The disparity being that the often articulated mission and vision statements work to construct organizational structures that are 1) not sustainable or 2) not a priority. In theory, it is apparent that the core leadership supports and places an emphasis on diversity as a priority; however, in practice the rhetorical vision and mission statements carry no weight and diminishes any direct explanations for the relevance of it being a priority. These findings support Iverson’s (2007) concept that institutional diversity statements, which are related to structural diversity, can function to camouflage the deeper implications behind these public statements to the extent that it (rhetoric) strengthens access to higher education for minorities and ranks diversity and inclusion as a priority.

These findings point to at least one direction for future research. First, it is critical that institutional mission and vision statements address racial inequities. When students talked about their college choice experience, many talked openly about attending and transferring to an HBCU so they would feel “at home” (Angel, personal communication, May 7, 2011). This suggests that some minority serving institutions (MSI) are more accepting of the various ways that students perform the urban habitus, and are more inclusive and accepting of students from non-traditional backgrounds (i.e. low-income, first generation, high achieving college students). In those environments,
students are made to feel that their urban habitus is welcomed and the performance of their Black femininity and masculinity is acceptable, although it does not reflect the dominant culture. Furthermore, the disparity between institutional rhetoric and educational practices, at rural PWIs illustrates the impact environment has on student engagement and the likelihood that students will persist or transfer once they discover they must deviate from their urban habitus. The researcher argues that the habitus of urban Blacks speaks volumes and overshadows the institutional rhetoric of acceptable and unacceptable ways of knowing, thinking and behaving. Within the context of a rural PWI, institutional habitus is one way to gage persistence and success. Any attempt to operationalize habitus apart from a cultural lens lends itself to a narrowly defined attempt to promote access and inclusion for minority and underrepresented groups by the numbers only.

To avoid strengthening the institutional rhetoric, a CRT analysis would call for a dismantling of policies and procedures through unveiling organizational power structures. Although a fundamental change in the perceptions and attitudes of rural PWIs may take time to nurture, the utility of CRT suggests that these outward manifestations continue to mask and camouflage the deep fundamental roots of -isms while strengthening power structures and promoting the value of Whiteness as property and White privilege that trouble our society (Iverson, 2007). Furthermore, the utility of CRT would suggest the systematic deconstruction of assumptions and perceptions from subtle institutional practices that work against and suppresses any hint of diversity and/or difference. If institutional practices and rhetoric are left unexamined the disparity between structural
and interactional diversity will continue unabated without efforts to make it visible to those in positions of leadership and power. Consequently, leaving those most victimized by it, the Urban Scholars in this case, unprotected and alienated from the institution, possibly leading to academic failure.

One implication for institutions is the need to develop a strategic plan to infuse diverse perspective through university curricula, academic and non-academic units. This approach would shift the onus from structural to interactional diversity, and from the micro- (i.e. minority and underrepresented students, and multicultural and diversity units) to a macro-level (i.e. university). Furthermore, this shift could lead to a more meaningful conversation about the value of recruitment, retention, inclusion and engagement for multicultural and underrepresented students, which will enable “policy makers to disrupt the status quo and destabilize the regulatory tendencies of dominant discourse” (Iverson, 2007, p. 607).

Key areas such as university recruitment and retention, organizational culture and faculty-student relationships are all affected by the perceptions of race, culture and gender. A closer examination of these variables through a CRT lens will aid in the narrowing of stereotypical attitudes and expand the view of diverse perspectives. In turn, this would shift organizations from managing diversity to making meaningful institutional changes in behaviors (i.e. habitus) and attitudes as we work towards making interactional diversity a priority. The utility of CRT provides a paradigm to make visible the powers, institutional practices and policies that foster a homogeneous environment
which excludes and penalizes social and academic behaviors associated with cultures not aligned with dominant ways of knowing, thinking and behaving.

A central tenant of CRT, interest convergence (Bell 1980; Bell, 1995b; Milner, 2008b; Taylor, 2000), was seen throughout the study and illustrates that as long as the interest of Whites are met, there is little need to eradicate policies and procedures that do not advance their causes. Therefore, if higher education practitioners and leaders fail to make the invisible visible, the status quo will remain the same for dominant group members and the institution will never foster the full potential of multicultural students.

This research study offers an opportunity for practitioners, scholars and researchers to reflect upon and discuss CRT and the importance of full inclusion for minority students.

**Results of Research Question Two**

What role does race, culture and gender play in their conception of achievement?

*Theme: “Reducing Toxic Threats” and “The Alien among Us”*

The primary purpose of this research study was to discover the role that race, culture and gender play in the Urban Scholars perception of achievement. Although there is much speculation about what underlies the many causes for Black student educational [under] achievement, results from this study indicate that race is a factor. From the time these students entered the formal education arena, every level of their schooling had assessed their achievement, with research indicating that Blacks fall behind their White counterparts (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Perry, 2003; Steele, 1997; Steele, 2003).

According to Steele (1992) and Jencks and Phillips (1998), the disparity in the educational achievement is not in its entirety attributed to class/socioeconomic status.
Among the many factors that researchers suggest impede the education progress of Blacks are genetics and environmental (i.e. culture, poverty); however, these variables, even when controlled for, are difficult to alter and offer little explanation in addressing strategies for racial gaps in performance (Boykin, 2001; Boykin et al., 2005; Boykin & Jones, 2004). Conversely, a plethora of research conducted in the area of stereotype threat points to psychological factors that interrupt and affect the educational achievement of Blacks (Steele, 1992; Steele, 1997; Steele, 1999; Steele, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele & Aronson, 2004; Steele et al., 2002). According to this body of research, the underlying assertion behind this framework is that Blacks are academically/intellectually inferior to their White counterparts.

In the current study, stereotype threat was found to impede the academic achievement in successful urban Black students. Given the hierarchical nature of our society (e.g. race, culture, class, gender, geographical locale) the research participants faced stereotype threat and racial microaggressions during their interactions with their White counterparts - both peers and faculty. Although the university focuses heavily on structural diversity, narratives highlight the need to focus on interactional diversity to create a more welcoming educational climate. By shifting the focus from structural to interactional diversity, and examining the educational processes of urban youth, the campus climate yielded multiple examples of stereotype threat and racial microaggressions. Specific characteristics have been identified from this research study that looks at achievement and they include:

- Black students are laden (taxed) with extra cognitive and psychological burdens that are not common to those who do not experience threats
associated with Black culture. In response to this tax, students attempted to demystify racial stereotypes by educating their White peers.

- In the classroom, students experience low teacher and peer expectations, leaving Blacks filled with anxiety about the likelihood of confirming Black stereotypes germane to [under] achievement.

- The institution values traditional measures of intelligence. In the context of a rural PWI, intelligence is measured apart from a cultural context whereby multiple forms of intelligence are not recognized. These pseudo measures of intelligence are identifiable smoke screens that filter out unlikely candidates based upon cognitive abilities.

- Racial microaggressions, and assaults, extend the framework of stereotype threat, with internal and external forces impacting campus climate and the psychosocial adjustment of Blacks attending rural PWIs.

- In the context of a rural PWI, the intersectionality of race, geographical locale, gender and class mimics the constraints imposed by the geographical boundaries of the urban context. Students matriculate through a dual K-12 educational system (i.e. funding, available resources, curriculum tracking) and are expected to perform as well as their peers once they enroll in institutions of higher education.

- Stereotype threat appears to undermine achievement through anxiety and disidentification. Over time this disidentification [from academics] frustrates students, requires more cognitive resources to counter the threats and leaves less cognitive resources for classroom performance.

- Students employ various psychological responses to subtle and covert forms of racism such as racial microaggressions, stereotype threat and assaults. Responses include proving them [Whites] wrong, self-censorship and engagement in leadership opportunities. These psychological responses, while working to minimize threats, also affect classroom performance.

- Gender differences illustrate that females and males respond differently to campus climate. Females tend to ignore assaults and threat, consider transferring and doubt their intellectual abilities and contributions to the university, while males ignore academic advice that does not align with their academic goals and engage in visible leadership opportunities.

In the current research, students were asked about cultural [urban] and racial stereotypes and microaggressions in hopes of developing an understanding of their
effects. Although students were able to acknowledge the presence of stereotypes without
naming it as racism, these negative affects acted as a springboard for students to alter the
way they view achievement and intelligence. Specifically, students hold fast that
achievement should expand to include multiple forms of intelligence and is influenced by
culture. In sum, their perceptions supports Gardner’s (1999) definition of intelligence as
the “potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve
problems or create products that are of value in a culture” (pp. 33-34). The researcher
suggests that urban student underperformance and disengagement in the classroom would
be lessened if (1) faculty/ staff and students were encouraged to view intelligences in
various forms and in multiple ways to be measured and (2) if threats in the air were
minimized in and outside of the classroom.

Clear gender differences indicate that males in this study tended to disidentify
from academics for a short lived time period when compared to their Black female
counterparts, who disidentify from academics for longer periods of time. This may
explain the progressive nature of lowered GPAs the students experienced throughout the
K-16 pipeline. While some research participants were enrolled in gifted and talented and
early college preparatory programs and graduated as salutatorian from high school, their
college GPAs indicate that something is preventing a continual progression of
achievement. For example, although students met university and scholarship
requirements and are considered successful by traditional measures, once enrolled in the
university, they struggled to keep their GPAs above a 2.5 in order to keep their four-year
renewable scholarship.
The researcher suggests that because stereotype threat affected the academic achievement of Urban Scholars it offers a more substantive reason for underachievement when compared to reasons put forth by the deficit model (i.e. poverty, genetics, teacher expectations), particularly since the Urban Scholars had already overcome these factors and were deemed successful by standard achievement measures. Since ability grouping, curriculum tracking, proficiency tests and standardized measures are all part of the school milieu, it is almost impossible to change the way achievement is measured; however, what is possible is for teacher-educators and administrators to acknowledge these features are part of the classroom and work towards redefining the traditional paradigm of the what achievement looks like.

It is remarkable to note that the expandable view of achievement has a much more positive influence on grades than the overall traditional paradigm. For instance, participation in the Urban Scholars Scholarship program requires students to attend weekly study groups and roundtable discussions, contribute to others through community service hours and attend workshops to foster their overall achievement. Hence, there is a stark difference between what the scholarship program considers achievement and what the university measures as achievement. The researcher suggests that by expanding the latter, dramatic gains in academic achievement could occur in the classroom. For example, in the classroom students are faced with isolation and exclusion from their peers, whereas during joint roundtable discussions they join with other university scholarship recipients (i.e. Urban, Appalachian, Templeton Scholars) and are able to see a visual representation of what a well rounded scholar looks like, which includes
interactional diversity/ cross cultural communication between and among scholars with differing geographical regional, racial, cultural and class backgrounds.

In an attempt to move past structural diversity, Calvin, a campus leader, suggested that the university could do a better job with cross cultural interaction among university students, ranging from housing accommodations to promoting interaction among students from diverse backgrounds. In an effort to begin the interactional diversity process, Calvin discussed the rationale behind moving from individual Urban Scholars roundtable discussions to joint roundtable discussions where all scholarship recipients meet together.

There have been a lot of books written on that [self segregation] and I think our tendency is to gravitate towards those who are like us or who have a similar experience. I think we, like most college campuses across the country try to do things to bring our students together across cultural boundaries and we need to do a better job. We definitely need to work on res life with doing a better job at this and we need to do a better job. What I see students doing in the roundtables is segregating more so by their program, which had a tendency to be skewed by race. Because the Templeton’s which are a little bit more diverse, they all tend to sit next to each other for the most part. So you didn’t see as much racial stratification in that group. However, you saw it definitely among the Appalachians and Urban Scholars…We do need to do a better job of promoting cross cultural interactions on campus (Calvin, personal communication, June 28, 2011).

It is quite possible that if interactional diversity were woven throughout the co-curricular experiences of students attending the university there could potentially be a reduction in stereotype threat in the air, negative assaults and microaggressions it incites. In turn, this could improve achievement for Urban Scholars and shift the paradigm from the more traditional measures of what intelligence looks like. This interaction could also shift or expand the way that Whites perceive intelligence and how it is implemented through co-curricular activities.
In the context of a rural PWI, data indicated that on a micro and macro level the university is not thoroughly equipped to deal with the slowly increasing number of African American student population, even at 4.5% (Ohio University Office of Institutional Research, 2010). In fact, as college campuses become more diverse, difficult dialogue on issues surrounding race, gender, class and culture often serve to polarize university administration (Iverson, 2007), as well as faculty, staff and students rather than to use it as an opportunity to clarify and understand difference. In this study, urban Blacks described racial microaggressions as subtle and covert ways of being overlooked and devalued solely based upon salient identity makers of race, class and urban geographical location. Findings revealed that assaults and microaggressions were so subtle that participants failed to see them as acts of racism and discrimination.

According to CRT theorist, Solórzano et al. (2001), since microaggressive exchanges are so subtle and occur in everyday interactions and conversations they are often glossed and not really recognized for their true intent. Nevertheless, they are extremely damaging to urban Blacks in college classroom since it impairs performance and induces psychosocial responses. On the contrary, perpetrators may be unaware that a microaggressive communication has occurred. Although urban Blacks may be aware that something has happened in their everyday interactions and communication with their White peers, there may be an inability to identify and articulate these occurrences. Through the lens of CRT, the importance of these realities from the vantage point of the [Black] participants (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) is critical in that they demonstrate how race and the effects of racism still permeate and dominate our society (Bell, 1992).
By naming these realities, the voices that emerge from this research offers insight into the value and social construction of race. Implications for high school guidance counselors, student affairs staff (micro) and university leaders (macro) include: adequate student preparation related to college readiness skills and course preparation, strong support systems, direct guidance in the college choice process, engaging in difficult dialogue and providing adequate resources.

Data for the current study indicated that students who attend underfunded, under resourced urban apartheid schools (Kozol, 2006) are less likely to enroll in a rigorous high school curriculum that fosters college readiness skills. Analysis of data further indicated that secondary curriculum courses have a direct impact on the academic experiences of urban youth at the postsecondary level. Although some research participants attended affluent, private and college preparatory high schools, were enrolled in gifted and talented programs and graduated class salutatorian, course work was not robust enough to adequately prepare students with college readiness skills. Implications for high school guidance counselors should include (1) an introduction to college readiness skills at the onset of formal instruction. This early explorations and planning process will employ students and their parent(s) earlier in the educational planning and college choice process whereby facilitating college readiness skills. Next, guidance counselors should ensure that urban high school students enroll in courses that adequately prepare them for postsecondary institutions, which is one of the most reliable predictors of success in higher education (Banks, 2009; Callan, et al., 2006). Third, counselors should work in conjunction with others to surround urban students with peers, adults,
mentors and extracurricular experiential activities that support their college going aspirations. Next, counselor should provide direct assistance to urban students in completing steps needed for college entry (i.e. admission exams, financial aid applications, college admission application, college visits), and finally engage urban Black youth in experiences where they learn from (cultural capital and interactional diversity) and with White high achieving suburban youth. By acquainting urban students with advanced opportunities to gain knowledge about dominant ways of knowing, understanding and being, this would mitigate some of the culture shock during the adjustment period experienced by Black urban youth matriculating through rural PWIs. Specifically, it would provide opportunities for urban Blacks to familiarize themselves with institutional culture and how dominant culture conceptualizes academic achievement, which may be instrumental in developing pathways to academic success for urban Blacks attending rural PWIs.

An implication for student affairs staff is to understand the irony of how historical factors influence and shape contemporary issues for urban Blacks attending rural PWIs. This means engaging in difficult dialogue that deconstructs power paradigms, unmasks personal acts of racism and allows Whites to realize the privilege and benefits accrued to them because of Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995). Furthermore, this means developing an understanding of how systemic forces contribute to and produce separate neighborhoods, dual systems of education and dual work forces for certain sect of students who matriculate through institutions of higher education. To this end, the ability to facilitate difficult dialogue surrounding race, culture and gender is not the sole
responsibility of diverse faculty and staff, rather it becomes a shared responsibility and a concerted effort for various units across campus with the purpose of improving cross-cultural communications and intercultural student affairs; hence, making diversity not just structural but interactional in nature.

A final implication for university officials (i.e. executive staff and administrators) involves leadership that is committed to inclusion, diversity and intercultural affairs with an aim to ensure adequate resources, institutionalization of these values and a narrowing of the gap between institutional rhetoric and reality. This also means shifting or expanding the paradigm of what achievement looks like, which may have grave consequences in deconstructing structures of power and privilege. This translates into the university’s willingness to examine the representation of power within their internal structures, including faculty/staff (i.e. pedagogy/curricula) and senior staff/administration (i.e. governance). In this manner, the responsibility for organizational change is laid squarely at the feet of the university, not that of underrepresented and/or minority students, faculty or staff.

It is critical that we look past the deficit model of blaming the social construction of race, culture and gender for the disparity in achievement between Blacks and their White counterparts. To counter this phenomenon, rural PWIs must actively recruit and retain an ethnic-minority faculty, staff and administration that works simultaneously to improve the campus milieu for all students attending the university, as well as for majority faculty that inherently values diversity and has experience implementing diverse initiatives in theory and/or practice. With numerous policy interventions and a firm push
past structural diversity, we look past physical presence towards the role that all parties play in increasing the variations of perceptions and ideas and creating a more inclusive campus and learning community.

In this section the researcher used concepts of stereotype threat and microaggressions to demonstrate ways in which PWIs can seek to improve engagement and retention of urban Blacks by seeking to change their internal structures and practices within these power structures. Although traditional measures of achievement are deeply embedded in the schooling milieu, institutions who embrace an expanded view of what achievement looks like, are more likely to be in less dissonance with individual students who hail from non-traditional backgrounds, come from various geographical locations and cultures of poverty and who are first generation college students. This, in turn, is likely to have a direct impact on retention and engagement and will provide urban Blacks with more resources to cope with the pressures associates with being “a fly in milk” (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011). The significance of these findings draw attention to the shared responsibility of K-16 initiatives and micro and macro educational policy and practices that create dual systems of education, which further constructs student achievement gaps and perceptions of what standard measures of achievement look like. Secondly, these findings address the more pertinent issue of how K-16 educational institutions fail minority students (e.g. Black, Hispanic) and moves toward seeking systemic, sustainable and organizational change.

The fragmented nature in which the K-16 educational continuum operates suggests a need for more collaboration at the level of state governance which promotes
educational change through policy implementation. According to an analysis of data in the current study, the academic achievement of urban students at the secondary level is not a good predictor of how they will perform in state post secondary institutions. This indicates a structural and organizations schism between K-12 and postsecondary education. In a study conducted in 2003 by Venezia, Kirst and Antonio, these authors found that policy structures assist or confuse students, parents, and/ or K-12 educators concerning postsecondary educational opportunities. Applied to college participation gaps, Venezia et al. (2005) further suggest there is a need for state funding and policy efforts to make certain that underserved and disadvantaged populations participate in college. Hence, by creating a continuum of educational links and policies (K-16) that improve transitions from high schools to college, this may directly affect the level of preparation, curriculum and course content offerings so critically needed to deal with postsecondary college and financial access, academic achievement and success.

In addition to the critical need for institutional leadership committed to organizational change and issues of diversity, inclusion and intercultural student affairs, this research suggests that by creating incentives to partner with K-12 educational systems from a governance standpoint, this may shape policy, curriculum and instruction and organizational structures supporting K-16 reforms. The K-16 educational system needs comprehensive reform which calls for the removal of fragmented approaches and dual systems of education based upon race, class and culture while moving towards more sustainable reforms that undergird K-16 organizational structures.
Results of Research Question Three

What were the experiences of former Urban Scholars?

Theme: “The Castaways”, “Capital One Rewards”, “Reducing Toxic Threats” and “The Alien among Us”

The experiences of current and former Urban Scholars mirror one another in that both describe their overall academic and social experience of attending a rural PWI as saturated with dominant cultural norms and values. For instance, student narratives suggest that in and outside of the classroom they experienced exclusion, isolation, stereotypes (i.e. racial, cultural), microaggressions, interest convergence, anxiety and perceived they were somewhat academically underprepared when compared to their White peers. In turn, students drew upon different forms of capital to gain access and entry into institutional structures embedded with power and privilege. When asked how she described the climate at the university Karmah replied, “Whiteness” (Karmah, personal communication, May 3, 2011). As noted by Abigail, attending a rural PWI, is comparable to being a “fly in milk” (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011) where (a) Black students are not heard or seen in the classroom and (b) differences are noticed but seldom acknowledged.

As a result of perceived isolation, students are drawn to those who share similar cultural values and norms relative to the urban experience. Most often this translated into students converging at cultural centers and spaces across campus to preserve their social identity. As such, cultural centers played a critical role in the preservation of social identity for most research participants; however, it was quite evident among former Urban Scholars that the role of cultural centers in the lives of Black students attending a
rural PWI is critical. A former Urban Scholar, who was also part of the inaugural class of Urban Scholars indicated that out of all the places to go on campus, the cultural center was where she went to find a sense of community, critical mass and respite.

We felt like it [multicultural center] was ours. It was something we didn’t have to share and it was a place where we could be us. It was for us. Everything was just for us. We didn’t have to try and fit in or try and be noticed… I didn’t have to worry about what people were going to say as far as how I talked. I was able to be myself and didn’t have to put on no facade. I really don’t think I put on a facade outside of the center, but I felt like I was being watched. I cautioned myself a lot. I watched what I said or how I said it. Being in the center I was able to relax and be free for the most part (Abigail, personal communication, May 21, 2011).

Abigail’s explanation of what she enjoyed about the multicultural center highlights how cultural centers have a powerful impact on Black students since it promotes engagement and retention in a much broader sense, which counters the negative effects of racial and cultural stereotypes and microaggressions. The specific characteristics identified from student narratives indicate that centers create a positive learning environment in the following manner:

- Multicultural centers and retention offices throughout campus do not facilitate separation of urban Black students; rather they act as “watersheds” to prepare students to integrate into the larger campus environment. The opinion that cultural watersheds foster self-segregation among students is unfounded; however, what is clear is that various watersheds emerge out of academic and social exclusion of Blacks throughout the campus community.

- Multicultural centers and retention offices are spaces where urban Black students find a sense of community, have the ability to preserve their social and cultural identity and find support as they navigate troubled waters and uncharted territory of a rural PWI.

- Campus entities that work to create similar conditions of success (i.e. supplemental instruction, academic advancement center, academic advising) for all students have far less success with Black students when compared to
cultural centers and retention offices which highly regard culture.

- Although multicultural centers and retention offices encourage students to utilize campus wide resources that exists to benefit the entire student body, urban Black students opt to utilize cultural centers and retention offices, which limits their ability to acquire social capital (i.e. networking beyond their race and culture).

A trend the researcher noticed among former Urban Scholars was they utilized multicultural centers as a venue for social outlets more so than for educational purposes, which was by and large handled through the retention office. While spaces for urban Black students to socialize are an important component of student engagement, what is even more critical is the utility of these spaces for academic enrichment. According to Chen, Ingram, and Davis (2007), since higher education is a two-tier experience, including academic and social components, these authors suggest that academic gains made inside of the classroom are equally important as social gains received outside of the classroom. None the less, cultural centers should expand their services to include academic (e.g. mentoring, academic advising, panel discussions), social (e.g. mixers, movie night) and cultural programming (e.g. heritage month celebrations). Although these broad range programs would not meet the needs of all multicultural students, they increase the number of social and academic resources available to students. To this end, multicultural centers play a critical role in the integration of students into the larger campus community.

While the positive impact of these centers and retention structures remain clear, they are among the many institutional structures under fire when it comes to considering the additive value they bring to university campuses. While it is true that the exchange
value of recruiting minority students to the university assists in the university’s reputation and standing in the competitive marketplace discourse (Iverson, 2007), cultural centers and minority recruitment and retention offices still struggle with limited people resources and constant structural organizational change. The lack of financial resources for diversity initiatives at the university is evident with unit budgetary cuts, structural re-organization over the last three years and the decrease in the number of Urban Scholarship recipients (McCoy, 2011; Wagner, 2011). Unlike academic units that are able to generate funds through research monies to support their unit(s), non-academic units (i.e. multicultural centers, retention office) are at the mercy of those in positions of leadership and power who determines their value, unless otherwise noted. Hence, in a time where accountability is at the forefront of the K-16 educational system and the state share of instructional funds is decreasing for state supported institutions, cultural centers must make a firm case for the value they add to the university. If state cuts to higher education continue, a potential outcome for the university is the reduction of programs and institutional structures that encourage racial and ethnic diversity, leaving an even larger disparity between institutional rhetoric and the reality. In fact, if rural PWIs continue to focus of structural diversity, as their minority population continues to increase, this could have grave implications for the campus climate if sustainable structures are not in place to support minority student matriculation.

Since former Urban Scholars provided a more comprehensive portrait of their experiences from the time of enrollment through complete matriculation, their narratives demonstrated the need for the university to take a culturally competent stance towards
inclusion and the creation of an environment that acknowledges respects and embraces all cultures. Furthermore, their narratives indicate that a rural PWI was not prepared to deal with the slowly increasing number of African American student population. It is the researcher’s opinion that the university welcomes urban Black students since their enrollment numbers (i.e. structural diversity) enhances their purchasing power (Iverson, 2007) in an already increasingly competitive educational market of student recruitment. Moreover, the university puts forth much rhetoric and minimal structural resources to socially and academically support these students.

Four practical implications for multicultural centers and retention offices can be derived from the experience of former Urban Scholars. First, support (i.e. financial, mentorship, advising) for Black students attending a rural PWIs is important, since cultural centers serve as the primary LINK to campus resources, whereby fostering student engagement and persistence. Cultural centers are also the primary avenue whereby Black students develop and maintain their social identity as they matriculate through PWIs where their very identity is often under attack and maligned. Next, given the lack of financial, fiscal and people resources multicultural centers and retention offices lack, a closer look at organizational structure is warranted. A determination of what programs and initiatives are duplicated across the two offices (i.e. multicultural center, retention) and a plan to synthesize programs and initiatives within units could alleviate operational expenses as well as free up fiscal resources for other initiatives.

Third, the implications for lack of funding across the non-academic units will impact the quality and quantity of institutional diversity initiatives and thwart efforts of
moving past structural diversity (i.e. enrollment numbers). Rural PWIs committed to programming initiatives that engage and retain all faculty, staff and students should expand these steps to include adequate funding and support for non-academic units that directly support multicultural students, from recruitment and summer pre-matriculation programs, through their first year experience and complete matriculation. Not only do non academic units require support in their operations, management and sustainability of their facilities, but adequate support (e.g. financial, staff) would maximize efforts and strategically infuse diversity and inclusion initiatives throughout the university community. This would narrow the rhetoric of the language surrounding the commitment to diversity (Iverson, 2007) to a reality. Specifically, a CRT lens would call for a closer look at the systemic organization of the institution, the examination of where these offices fall on the hierarchical spectrum of academic and non academic units and a dismantling of the organizational structures of power.

A final implication for multicultural centers and retention offices remains that of a competent staff. To a large extent, former Urban Scholars talked about center directors, faculty mentors and staff who supported their matriculation at the university. In sum, they helped create a positive environment for student transitioning from an urban to a rural environment. This is particularly important given that the inaugural class of Urban Scholars perceived that the program was not welcomed by the larger campus community. The findings clearly indicate that the efficacy of the staff (e.g. director, assistant directors, graduate assistants, administrative personnel) should not be undervalued. Directors, assistant directors and staff should work towards creating collaborative
relationships and joint initiatives with academic and non academic units across campus, work internally to foster amicable and collegial work environment with colleagues and develop effective communication strategies with students. The researcher also recommends metrics, assessment and evaluation of program initiatives and services to identify measurable gains, moving these non academic units beyond anecdotal data that strengthens the role, mission, importance and value of cultural centers at rural PWIs.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

When considering the overall findings of the study, there are limitations that should be made to qualify the interpretations. First, urban Blacks who attend PWIs may develop different supportive network structures (e.g. social capital) in response to their perception of their co-curricular environment than those mentioned in the study. For instance, although urban Blacks perceived they were excluded from the larger campus community as it related to their achievement they may also develop support through informal networks, such as family members, high school administrators and friends. Future research that examines how urban Blacks approach the college choice and matriculation process should examine the role of informal networks and social capital as an important component and building block for future research studies interested in minority student engagement and persistence factors. The confluence of these factors may affect the institutional habitus of students and assist them in overcoming institutional, structural and racial barriers.

A subsequent consideration in the analysis and interpretation of the findings is that of examining intergroup interactions instead of cross-cultural interactions. Though
many urban students lived in homogenous geographical regions (i.e. urban locale) and attended apartheid schools (Kozol, 2006) with a high percentage of Black and Latino/Latina students, it is probable that they interacted with Latino/Latina students in these sites. In looking at the college experience in geographical locales where there is less ethnic and racial diversity (e.g. rural) than what exists in the students’ urban culture, it is critical to include additional groups into assessing the nature of intergroup relationships. For example, classification among students may be a factor in their perception of achievement and their co-curricular experiences in the context of a PWI. Findings from the current study highlighted that current Urban Scholars, especially the sophomore, had difficulty naming her experiences and had more positive perceptions of the role that race, culture and gender played in her conception of achievement when compared to former Urban Scholars. This was also true when comparing lower and upper classmates. It could be that urban Blacks who lived in and attend schools in racially and culturally homogenous environments have an initial assumption that rural PWIs welcome them under the guise of an aggressive recruitment posture and through quality summer pre-matriculation programs. Hence, for urban Blacks who are aspiring to attend college, there seemingly appears to be more interactional diversity during the recruitment phase, when in fact, once urban Blacks begin matriculation structural diversity then becomes the primary goal.

In addition, upper classmen and former Urban Scholars who have had more time to acquire different forms of capital understand the institutional culture and the importance of context that impacts how their social identity is performed. This specific
cadre of students also demonstrated a double awareness of their environment and have
time, knowledge and experience with understanding the institutional culture and
cultural milieu of a rural PWI. To this end, upper classmen and former Urban Scholars
may be better equipped to respond to the unwelcoming climate of a rural PWI. Although
this conclusion cannot be proved through participant narratives due to the lack of
longitudinal data, future empirical research can further explicate how student develop
psychosocially over time.

A final consideration is that since urban Blacks from 1 rural PWI site were
included in the study, findings cannot be generalized to all rural PWIs. Future research
studies that examine minority populations from multiple institutional types is warranted
(i.e. community college, minority serving institutions, private institutions). In addition,
since more urban Black females than urban Black males were represented in this study,
an examination of gender differences is needed. Findings from the current study indicate
that urban Black males tend to have better coping strategies and psychosocial responses
to stereotype threat, racial assaults and microaggressions when compared to their Black
female counterparts attending a rural PWI. This finding is interesting given that gender
gaps concerning high school completion rates continue to persist with women outpacing
men (ACE, 2011). Similarly to high school completion rates, evidence of gender gaps
exist at the postsecondary level, with young women surpassing enrollment numbers of
men, which account for more degrees conferred (ACE, 2011). Future research may
examine gender differences and the psychosocial adjustment of Blacks who attend PWIs,
leading to implications for psychological services and cross-cultural and culturally competent counseling in higher education.

While considering the above issues of exclusion, habitus, stereotype threat and microaggressions, explicating the co-curricular experiences of Urban Scholars highlighted the complexity of internal and external factors that impact their K-16 educational experiences. This approach demonstrates that student perceptions pertaining to ways that race, gender, culture and geographical location function on their campus environment provided substantive contributions to educational policy, counters the master narrative and provides empirical research seeking to explicate the experiences of urban Blacks attending a rural PWIs.

One implication is that fostering a welcoming social and academic environment where all student contributions are valued is an important outcome for student engagement and persistence. In bridge programs that assist multicultural student transitions from secondary to postsecondary institutions, campus leaders, student affairs personnel, diversity offices, retention programs and multicultural centers should collaborate across and within units to foster open dialogue with all students about the importance of inclusivity. Although institutional culture is affected by structural diversity (i.e. enrollment numbers), a move towards interactional diversity would foster student success, engagement and persistence, compel university leaders to acknowledge ways to lessen or minimize threats in the air and improve the campus climate. To bring substantive organizational changes throughout the campus community, within group interactions should expand beyond minority and underrepresented populations and extend
to interactions among individuals and groups in the dominant culture and racial group across units including but not limited to student affairs, diversity and inclusion offices, multicultural centers and retention offices.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Urban Scholars Personal Profile Form

Urban Scholars Personal Profile Form

Did you request FAFSA results be sent to OU?  
[ ] Yes  [ ] No  
Gender:  [ ] Female  [ ] Male

Please print or type your responses

Applicant Name: ____________________________  
First  
Middle  
Last

Mailing Address: _____________________________________________________________________
City  
State  
Zip

Home Phone #: ____________________________  
Cell Phone #: ____________________________

E-mail Address: ____________________________

Date of birth (mm/dd/yyyy): ____________________________  
Place of birth: ____________________________

High School Name: ____________________________

Type School:  [ ] Public School  [ ] Private School  [ ] Charter School  
Guidance Counselor: ____________________________

Counselor Phone #: ____________________________  
Counselor Fax #: ____________________________

Please list the majors or careers that you are considering.
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Please list any honors or awards you have received during high school and the grade in which you received the honor.
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Please list any school related conferences or conventions in which you participated.
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Page 1
Please list the activities in which you have been involved, the positions you held and the grades in which you participated in the activities. (Please print or type)

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Council - Treasurer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Activities</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extracurricular Activities</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please list Hobbies/Special Interests that you have:

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Please list your employment history including both the organization name and your position:

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
Appendix B: Lay Summary

I am conducting a research study to obtain information about your educational experiences while attending Ohio University. As a researcher, I am interested in learning more about your time at the university and how it has impacted your academic and social experience. I am asking you to participate since your perceptions about your experiences will help me understand how successful Blacks make it through college.

The information you provide may allow higher education professionals to take a critical look into the importance of race-specific support mechanisms for Black students at their institutions. It will also allow them to understand how urban Blacks perceive the campus environment, to what extent you engage and feel part of the university community. The answers you provide will add to the current research literature looking at the experiences of Blacks attending postsecondary institutions. Since you are being asked to participate in a research study, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision.

Anytime the information you provide is used, a pseudonym will be used so you cannot be identified. You can even decide upon a pseudo-name if you like. The information you provide will be gathered through a series of interview questions specific to race, culture, and gender. If you agree to take part in the study, during the interview, I will need your permission to tape record the interview and take notes to remind me of what we have talked about.

As stated earlier, anonymity will be used, and your name will not appear in the study nor will it be revealed to university administrators, students, faculty, or staff. As
part of your participation in this study, I will spend time with you and talk with you over
the course of a number of weeks. We will begin the study by talking about your
educational experiences and what led you to university. During the second interview we
will discuss issues related to your specific experiences at OU. There are no right or
wrong answers to the questions asked. I’m just looking for your opinion, ideas or
feelings. If at any time you feel uncomfortable you can decide to withdraw from the
study or stop participating at any time - even after you have started. If you decide to stop
the study, your decision will not impact any future contact you have with Ohio
University. And finally, you will not receive any compensation for participating in the
study.

I will be the only person who knows you are participating in the study. All of the
information discussed will remain confidential and will be kept in the strictest
confidence. Only the dissertation chair and the researcher will have access to the
recorded information. Recorded data will be stored on a computer, which requires a user
name and password. Once the study is complete a copy of the study will be placed in the
dissertation director’s office. Both the researcher and dissertation director are the only
persons who will have direct access to this information. Immediately following the
interviews the data will be transcribed. After the dissertation project is written, complete,
and approved by my dissertation committee, data will be erased 4 months following
completion of the study. Following the study I will include some of the information in a
manuscript to be published, which will be peer reviewed and read by others doing similar
research.
Appendix C: Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Achievement and Culture
(What role does cultural identity play in defining achievement?)

Probes:
- How do you identify yourself?
- How do you define culture?
- How do you define Black culture?
- How do you define Whiteness?
- Explain your perception of culture versus heritage?
- What is your cultural heritage?
- In what ways do you demonstrate your cultural heritage or identity?
- How do you maintain your cultural identity while attending OU?
- Do you think your professors are accurately able to determine how well you are learning? How so?
- How do grades and standardized test scores measure your achievement?
- How can professors access your performance [other than test scores]?
- How does culture influence your understanding of achievement?

Social Perceptions of Race and Place
(What are the social perceptions of urban African American men/women?)

Probes:
- What is your perception of the word urban?
- Generally speaking how would you describe urban African American students?
- How do you view yourself as an urban African American urban female/male?
- As a scholarship recipient, how are you perceived by the larger campus community (racially, socially, ethnically and economically)?
- How do you suppose urban is influenced by the media?
- How do you see these influences [stereotypes] portrayed in your interactions with other students? Faculty and staff?
- How have you personally overcome these stereotypes?
- If you could educate the larger campus community as an African American student coming from a community outside of the White middle class experience, what misconception(s) would you like to erase? What would you like them to know about you (if anything at all)?

Benefits of the merit-based scholarship program
(How have you benefited as a recipient of this merit-based scholarship program?)
Probes:
- What kind of support does your scholarship program provide?
- What name would you use to describe your scholarship program?
- What does your scholarship program mean to you?
- How has this scholarship program helped you?
- What does it mean to be a recipient of this 4 year renewable scholarship?
- How has this scholarship program influenced your career interests?
- Describe your experiences of being involved in this scholarship program.

**Campus environment, belongingness, and student engagement**
*(Do you feel a part of the larger campus community?)*

Probes:
- Tell me about your time on campus.
- What is it like being a Black woman/man on campus?
- Why did you choose to attend OU?
- Describe your social life at OU.
- What student groups are you involved with on campus?
- Why do you believe participation in [Black student] organizations is important?
- In what ways do you support each other?
- Describe the African American community on campus.
- How do activities in this community/organization differ from larger campus activities?
- How did you become connected with this community/organization?
- Does your community/organization interact/collaborate with larger organizations on campus?
- What experiences led you to participate (or not) from the larger community?
- Were there African American students who were not part of this community?
  - If so, why do you think that was?
  - How were they treated by others?
  - Were there students who were able to walk between both worlds?
  - How were they treated?
- What is acting White?
- Describe the campus climate?
- What incidence(s) support your perception of the campus climate?
- Talk about your interactions with Black students and Black professors on campus.
- Talk about your interactions with White students and White professors on campus.
- Describe your experiences with academic offices and student organizations.
- Describe any instances of personal racism, discrimination you may have experiences while on campus?