NARRATIVE-DRIVEN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF BLACK AND LATINX MALE COLLEGIANS

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NARRATIVE-DRIVEN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF BLACK AND LATINX MALE COLLEGIANS

This dissertation, by Christopher T. James, has
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ABSTRACT

NARRATIVE-DRIVEN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF BLACK AND LATINX MALE COLLEGIANS

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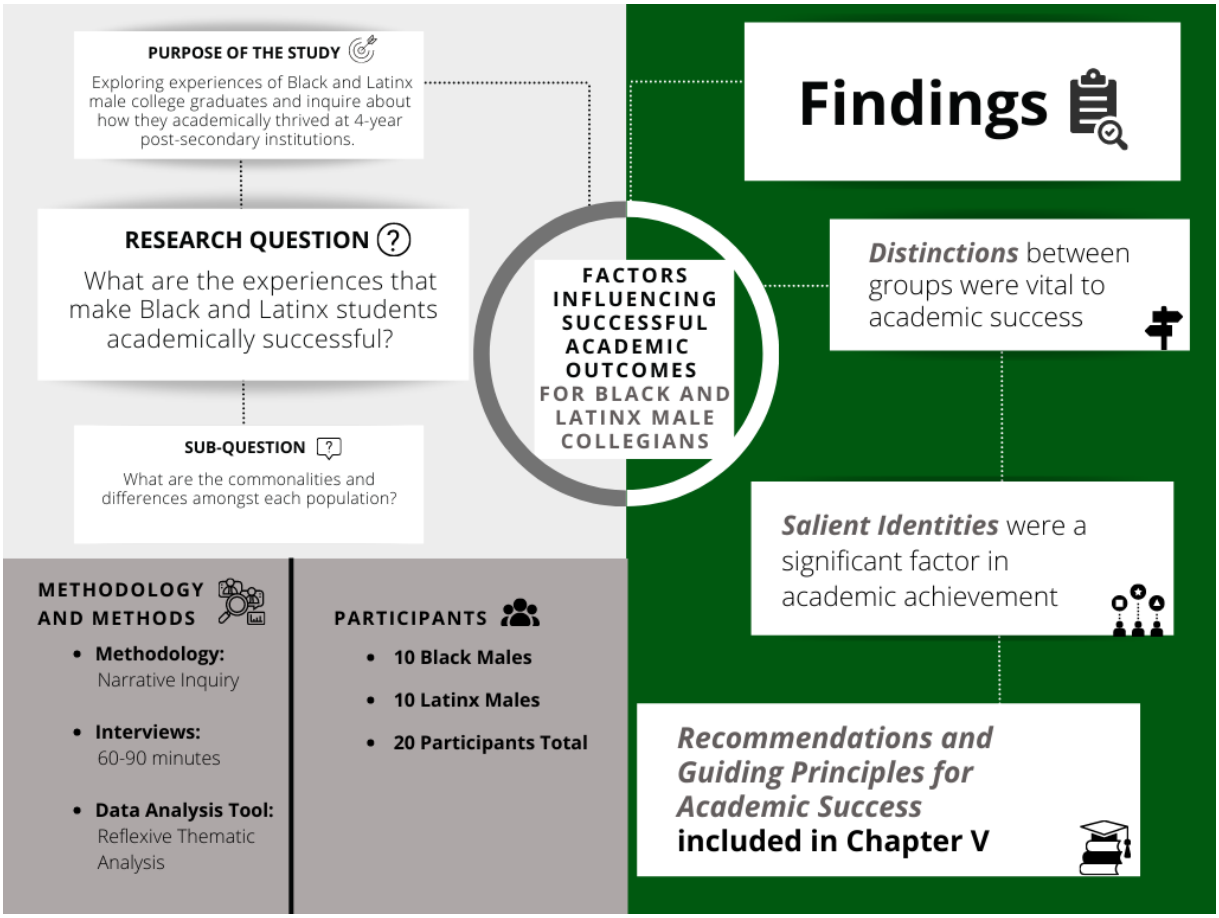
On the heels of America grappling with various racial and ethnic inequities, this dissertation explored the experiences of Black and Latinx males who graduated with bachelor's degrees from 4-year institutions. Participants navigated through different environments, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities [HBCUs], Hispanic Serving Institutions [HSI], and Predominately White Institutions [PWIs]. The study inquired about topics concerning their unique experiences and how they informed their collegiate academic success. Narrative Inquiry was the basis for 20 qualitative interviews (10 Black and 10 Latinx; interviewed for 60–90 minutes). Participants identified as U.S. citizens and graduated with a cumulative grade point average [GPA] of 3.0 and above. Reflexive Thematic Analysis [RTA] was performed to analyze the data. RTA is a distinguishing element of this study as it integrates the researcher's positionality, qualitative findings, and feedback from code reviewers (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This study constructed five main themes for Black and Latinx male collegians', ranging from Salient Identities to identifying Catalysts for Academic Success. Key findings of the study unearthed factors contributing to academic success that included factors such as: parental involvement, academic rigor, mentorship, and creating and engaging in spaces of fellowship and belonging. Findings also revealed cultural distinctions between groups are vital to understanding the appropriate academic resources. These distinctions between groups were factors such as: parental citizenship, cultural group sub-cultures (e.g., traditions, food, dance), and language and

vernacular. Participants' salient identities (identities that they are closely associated with—for example, being a scholar or community leader) were at the center of their high achievement. The dissertation concludes with guiding principles meant to assist educators in producing and implementing culturally responsive approaches to support Black and Latinx collegians academically. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

Keywords: Black male collegians, Latinx male collegians, academic success, narrative-driven educational practice, anti-deficit framework, narrative inquiry, reflexive thematic analysis, high-academic performance, leadership, metaverse

Figure 1.0

Graphic Abstract



Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my nephew, Roman, and niece, Rachel, who recently entered this world. Roman has been a light in my life that continues to motivate and inspire me to be a better person daily. I am immensely grateful to have had his laughter and love throughout this dissertation journey. The exciting addition of Rachel to the family will further illuminate my path and expand my heart. May you both be blessed with the wisdom, drive, determination, intentionality, and focus to manifest your dreams and reach fulfillment in your lives.

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CHAPTER I: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, SIGNIFICANCE, RELEVANCE, AND POSITIONALITY

For generations, individuals who identified as part of the Black and Latinx communities have been forced to surmount many obstacles throughout their educational journeys. These students have encountered racism, microaggressions, a lack of resources, financial burdens, and a sheer lack of personal investment by educators. Yet, they have tapped into their intrinsic motivation to overcome each challenge over the years. Each group has also employed specific habits (participating in particular peer groups, attending faculty office hours, utilizing college and university resources) to become successful students who thrive academically.

The existing body of research, beginning around the 2010s, has extensively researched what makes Black and Latinx males academically successful students (an academically successful student is operationally defined as having a 3.0 and above GPA, involvement in co-curricular and extracurricular activities). However, the literature does not adequately capture the nuances of their respective cultures and how that affects their academic success in college. Through this dissertation, I will attempt to provide insight into the worlds of these two populations. Finally, Chapter IV reveals the most significant factors (the commonalities and distinguishing factors) involved in Black and Latinx male college students successfully navigating their collegiate careers.

Black and Latinx students face a frequent issue: the lack of security within self-identity and the tension between their narratives and master narratives. Master Narratives are "culturally shared stories that guide thoughts, beliefs, values, and behaviors" (Syed et al., 2015, p. 323). Takaki (2006) stated: "The Master Narrative is the familiar story that America was settled by European immigrants and that Americans are white or European in ancestry" (p. 4). An issue not discussed thoroughly in the literature is how the master narrative overshadows the narratives of

Black and Latinx male students. Personal narratives are defined as individuals who, after going through a vast range of experiences in life, are "constructed and reconstructed" (Hammack, 2008, p. 223). These personal narratives prompt individuals to make meaning and provide a "script" for retelling their stories and operating in life.

The literature describes this as people of color needing to assimilate into the White culture and operate within those power structures (Collins, 2000). There needs to be a greater emphasis on Black and Latinx male students, each writing their version of empowering narratives. I designed this research to be a space that deconstructs their experiences and adds to a sense of their identity. My research seeks to continue the ongoing dialogue, which unpacks significant developmental experiences of Black and Latinx males and empowers educators with culturally responsive guidance to aid them along their collegiate journeys. Scholars and practitioners should continue to engage in: (a) the self-work involved in increasing cultural awareness, (b) the formal education and training to gain further cultural competency, and (c) moving past theory and implementing actual change that positively affects the lives of Black and Latinx males. Another objective of this research is to allow the space to appreciate that Black and Latinx male students live in duality when striving to thrive academically. This duality they face is an essential piece of the conversation in the barriers and difficulties they face when attempting to be successful in college. Although these two populations have similarities in many instances, Black and Latinx male students face different upbringings and effective academic strategies.

The similarities and differences will be discussed further in Chapter II and referenced throughout the dissertation. The research is littered with examples that focus on challenges. While I do not intend to cast doubt or add to disempowering and harmful narratives about

students of color, I want to acknowledge Black and Latinx male students and their complex identities. Discussing Black and Latinx college-going males means first recognizing the challenges, for example, frequent roadblocks, cultural influences, and the unique aspects of their narratives leading to overcoming challenges. Second, research needs to discuss success: parental engagement, creating a college-going mindset, instilling the discipline and skills that inform high academic performance, and so forth. Most past research does not discuss this particular population in a manner that analyzes multiple factors within their narratives and applies a reflexive data analysis method. In the proceeding chapters, I will demonstrate the full scope of Black and Latinx male students' identities while in a collegiate setting.

Significance and Relevance

This population is rapidly becoming a large demographic that educators serve, and institutions must understand how these students persist. It would behoove educators to understand the complexities associated with identifying as a Black or Latinx male student. Haywood (2017) stated, "In empirical research, educational researchers under-theorize about the role that skin color plays in the experiences of Latino students" (p. 763). In a study that sought to understand the effect a student's complexion has while navigating academic life, Haywood (2017) found, "All of the Latino-looking and Black-looking students spoke of instances of racism in relation to how they identify themselves, whereas the White-looking students did not" (p. 764).

In addition to learning to deal with complex identities, higher education is currently affected by enrollment issues for Black and Latinx male students. Slowly over the years, the educational landscape has changed, and enrollment of Black students has gradually increased across the United States. Cai (2020) stated that traditionally aged Black student enrollment at

post-secondary institutions significantly increased in 2018. However, enrollment and degree attainment for Black and Latinx male students remain low (Ballysingh, 2019; Naylor et al., 2015; Tolliver et al., 2019).

Ballysingh (2019) stated that the gender disparity within college enrollment and degree attainment "creates a challenging paradox; while men are systematically privileged in society, Latinos remain grossly underrepresented in higher education" (Ballysingh, 2019, p. 2). And this paradox (e.g., Naylor et al., 2015; Tolliver et al., 2019) is also true for Black males. Although colleges and universities are limited in what they can do about enrollment, they can refocus their efforts on degree attainment. Focusing on Black and Latinx male students who have not only adjusted to their college environments but also thrived revealed effective approaches to supporting this population. Educators can learn from Black and Latinx male students' narratives to engage in culturally sensitive interactions, culturally appropriate references, and approaches these populations engage in to succeed.

Research Purpose and Questions

The following is my research question and sub-question:

- **Main Research Question:** What are the experiences that make Black and Latinx students academically successful?
    - **Sub-Question:** What are the commonalities and differences amongst each population?

Positionality

As a cis-gender, Gay, Afro-Latinx male of Antiguan and Puerto Rican descent, I have faced a myriad of challenges that were not acknowledged due to a lack of knowledge and understanding regarding the intersectionality of my identities. In addition, I have been in spaces

that have not educated me on my Black or Latinx history and perpetuated American Whiteness and Eurocentrism as the ideal. In my professional career, I have encountered situations that dismiss my own experiences and the experiences of the students of color I served. Furthermore, while working in the United States higher education system, I have seen how dismissive and uninformed both faculty and administrators can be when creating programs and addressing the concerns of marginalized populations. From my experience, I have witnessed faculty members place unfair assumptions on Black and Latinx male students labeling them as lazy and disengaged. Therefore, I found examining issues surrounding Black and Latinx academic excellence vital through a supportive and strength-based lens. Due to my research interests and past experiences in being a part of spaces that struggle with addressing these concerns, I believe my perspective and findings will enrich the overall research in a rich and meaningful way.

Disabling Bias

I know that identifying as a member of the group I am researching can have advantages, making me keenly aware of the strengths, challenges, and areas I had to handle with care. Nevertheless, my connection can present issues of potential personal bias. Regarding minimizing the effects of personal bias in the study, I have ensured frequent feedback from my peers and committee members to ensure that all ethical concerns are addressed (Smith & Noble, 2014). Moreover, I explicitly stated the measures in place to adhere to high standards and ethical practices, which is essential to having a clear and transparent study (Smith & Noble, 2014). I will discuss my positionality and potential disabling bias further in Chapter III.

Existing Literature on the Black and Latinx Students

The lack of research that supports a deeper look into Black and Latinx students' engagement is compounded by the lack of understanding from colleges and universities that

these groups face different challenges. Black and Latinx students must straddle the line between interacting within their cultural groups and navigating predominately White cultural influences (Ballysingh, 2019; Harper & Davis, 2012). The challenge of navigating between two different cultural groups is that each group presents a unique version of language or vernacular, music, style of dress, etc. (Bigaouette, 2019; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). In addition, the literature underscores the colorism that is faced within the Latinx community, which disavows any notion of Blackness in their culture (Haywood, 2017).

The research suggests an "us versus them" mentality with exclusionary practices toward any Latinx individual who does not physically appear or culturally embrace the larger groups' practices (Haywood, 2017). The relatively new narrative of Black and Latinx students embraces the aspects of their experiences surrounding challenges and overcoming barriers (Gonzalez, 2020; Harper, 2012). Past literature highlights the importance of belonging on campus; however, academically successful students seem to circumvent this challenge of being racially discriminated against and execute their goals by practicing positive racial socialization (Carter Andrews, 2012). Research to date has not sufficiently explored how these populations are motivated and perform exceptionally well throughout their collegiate experiences.

Motivating Factors for Academically Successful Students

Despite the obstacles, academically successful students find a way to connect to resources, engage with the campus community, and form the connections necessary to succeed. I was interested in examining what allows Black/Latinx males to frame their life experiences to act as a catalyst for their success. Academically successful students can use specific instances or moments of trauma (e.g., racial discrimination) to motivate them to accomplish their goals

(Truong & Museus, 2012). Also, they embrace their familial ties and their parents, particularly their mothers, as role models (Ballysingh, 2019; Harper, 2006).

In many cases, the academically successful students' parents provided the blueprint for overcoming certain circumstances and modeled a strong work ethic (Harper, 2012; Lopez, 2019). Each qualitative study revealed a new layer of how a Black or Latinx student could navigate their journey (Bigaouette, 2019; Brooms, 2019; Calderón, 2018; Harper, 2012). However, the missing piece was how they used their motivation from various sources and applied it to their academics. I found while reviewing the literature that although there was much overlap between cultural expectations of Black and Latinx male students, there were also distinctions (Brooms, 2019). The Latinx culture had closer familial bonds, and Black families prepared their children for encountering racism earlier in life (Carter Andrews, 2012; Gonzalez, 2020). Due to institutions frequently ignoring or being ignorant of the differences, I explored the narratives of these students and brought them to light.

The Gap in the Literature on Black and Latinx Males

The gap in the literature appears to be an in-depth analysis of how Black and Latinx male collegians' distinct cultural backgrounds factor into their academic success. The literature lacks the detailed strategies both populations employ and a set of concrete culturally responsive solutions for educators to implement. Due to the increase in Black and Latinx male students (while degree attainment is still low compared to White or female students), more data should be collected to understand what resources would be best for them (Gramlich, 2017). A more nuanced understanding of each group's distinct needs may aid in producing an increase in high-academic performers. This dissertation seeks to fill the lack of information by providing

educators with guiding principles, found in Chapter V, that have the potential to produce successful academic outcomes for Black and Latinx male collegians.

While exploring the stories of males of color, I find it vital to frame the conversation in an empowering way and consider each population's complex identities. Before the 2000s, an overwhelming amount of research spoke about Black and Latinx students' deficits. The researchers would typically frame students of color in the following light: "The popular 'at-risk' construct, now entrenched in educational circles, views poor and working-class children and their families (typically of color) as being predominantly responsible for school failure, while frequently holding structural inequality blameless" (Valencia, 1997, p. xi).

The label of being "at-risk" or "underprepared" only highlights the need for new research to delve into the stories of successful male students who actively tackle multiple facets of the college experience. I would argue that without their stories, colleges and universities could not create a solid framework for addressing the needs of future students of color, in this case, Black and Latinx males. The main element missing from past research (e.g., the 1960s–1990s) is what drives this population. Essential questions such as these have not been addressed reflexively:

- What enables the student to overcome challenges when a difficult situation arises?
- How does the student's family structure provide them with the discipline to maintain academic success in college?
- What resources do the students engage in while navigating setbacks?

I have witnessed Black and Latinx students thrive during my professional work in student affairs at colleges and universities. I have discovered in this study specific tools, resources, support systems, and strategies they employ to meet the demands of college life. I investigated what makes the students academically successful by conducting a qualitative study

of 20 male college graduates (10 Black and 10 Latinx males). The interviews were 60–90 minutes long.

Individual interviews allowed for various topics to be brought up that may not have been thoroughly discussed if I had conducted focus groups. The one-on-one interviews allowed me to delve more deeply into the individual's experience and allowed them the space to reveal topics. By selecting a qualitative design, I have provided more depth of information and insight into the minds of these students. For qualitative interviews, I utilized a mix of purposive, snowball, and convenience sampling to select participants who have recently graduated with their undergraduate degrees.

Each participant's background met the following criteria: individuals who identify as a Black and Latinx male (the study was open to individuals who identified as transgender—although no participants openly identified as transgender in this study). The participants graduated from a U.S.-based institution with a bachelor's degree within the past five years. The following criteria have been used to ensure the participants were from a diverse set of backgrounds and experiences such as: first-generation college students from a Predominately White Institution (PWI), Historically Black College or University (HBCU), a public or private institution, and varying degrees of socioeconomic status.

Qualitative Research & Its Importance When Exploring Marginalized Identities

I have utilized a qualitative design. A qualitative approach allowed a deep dive into the lives of these groups and how colleges and universities can enact better practices to aid in academic success. When studying marginalized populations, it is vital to understand from their perspective the achievements and challenges they encounter instead of perpetuating an oppressive system that makes assumptions or minimizes each group's voices. Black and Latinx

students can become empowered by being given an environment to share their stories with the researcher, who can empathically hold space for each person's narrative (Gudmundsdóttir, 2001). Conducting interviews using narrative inquiry will provoke dialogue and reflection in the scholarly community as they unpack the data and insights provided by the overarching narrative and rich experiences that participant interviews within this research have captured.

I have explored the following factors during the interviews: experiences that the participants believe made them academically successful, grade point average (GPA), how they overcame challenges, extracurricular activities (i.e., clubs and organizations), and co-curricular activities (i.e., internships and study abroad). By capturing their stories, I sought to understand and illustrate how specific experiences are vital to producing Black and Latinx students who thrive on their campuses. For example, I asked the participants questions such as: (a) What experiences made you academically successful during college? (b) What role did your family play in your academic success in college? (c) Did any faculty act as formal or informal mentors, and did they help you achieve academic success?

The process of the qualitative interviews involved conducting 20 individual interviews via Zoom meetings that ranged between 60–90 minutes. Then, I transcribed all the interviews, reviewed the transcripts, and had participants review the extended profiles I constructed, including direct quotes. I added initial codes associated with their excerpts. Finally, I engaged in Reflexive Thematic Analysis. I manually constructed each theme by commenting within word documents and utilizing physical sticky notes to label the most salient aspects of their interview. Once themes were constructed, I shared them with my code reviewer and data analysts to examine and provide any additional insights.

Ethical Considerations

When conducting the study, I ensured the study maintained a high ethical standard by ensuring confidentiality was preserved, that the results displayed were a fair and accurate representation of what was collected, and that their psychological safety was maintained. Also, all identifiers, such as names and email addresses, have been redacted. Participants selected a pseudonym of their choice to maintain confidentiality. Regarding psychological safety, since the population I researched was part of marginalized groups, it was essential to recognize that part of their success may include moments of racism, micro-aggressions, and other forms of discrimination. I was sure to be observant of questions that provoked an adverse change in body language or moments of hesitation (sweating, loss of eye contact, stuttering, etc.) that triggered a participant to relive some past trauma. Through gauging their body language, I reiterated moments after initially stating in the opening script if they would like to take a break or pass on a question, which none of them elected to do.

Exploring the Terminology

When discussing the factors that contribute to producing academically successful Black and Latinx males in college, it is crucial to discuss the key terms used in the conversation. The following are the terms used when talking about the overarching narrative of Black male and Latinx male achievement:

Key Terms

-***Academic Achievement:*** A student's ability, after instructor evaluation, to achieve high academic marks at their undergraduate institution (L. Howard, 2020).

-***Academically Successful:*** students who successfully navigate their undergraduate tenure by scoring a cumulative 3.0 GPA and above (Harper, 2008).

-***Achievement Gap:*** This issue often affects students from marginalized backgrounds and underscores academic performance differences (typically Black students; performance against White). The following characteristics categorize these groups: socio-economic status and racial and ethnic make-up (Austin, 2019).

-***Anti-Blackness:*** The term anti-Blackness is a multi-layered method of dehumanizing Black individuals and seeing Black people as "problematic" through: (a) racism that is covert and overt, (b) implicit bias, (c) and the perpetuating or the creation of systemic-wide policies that disenfranchise the Black community (Williams Comrie et al., 2022).

-***Anti-Racism:*** An individual or group critically examining how current institutional systems create racist and inequitable environments. Agents frequently perpetuate harmful methods, narratives, perspectives, and policies within the system. Therefore, equitable change requires reflection on how to enact meaningful adjustments and advocacy to produce change (Harvard University, 2023; Mericle, 2020).

-***Anti-Deficit Framework:*** A perspective that challenges the stereotypical notions of what it means to be a student of color and refocuses on the student's resilience and areas of strengths. The framework allows for a line of questioning to the student that explores their whole selves concerning their interests, various skill sets, and mindset toward academic achievement (Harper, 2012).

-***Black or African American:*** One who, through their family lineage, has strong ties to the Black community and has a connection to the African diaspora. (Austin, 2019, p. 19).

-***Cognitive factors:*** the mastery of hard or technical skills associated with academic achievement (e.g., crafting essays, researching data, etc.; Farrington et al., 2012).

-***Colorism:*** the challenges or privileges granted to an individual within their racial community based on an expectation of "Whiteness" as the preferred standard. Individuals with physical features that closely resemble a White individual are favored, and those who do not are typically seen as less than others (Hall, 2005; Hunter, 2005).

-***Critical Consciousness:*** An individual's journey to understanding that the life perspective they hold is heavily informed by levels of access to various resources connects to "larger sociopolitical contexts" at play (Freire, 2005).

-***Culturally Responsive:*** An individual with the intellectual and emotional capacity to engage in the ongoing process of acquiring more knowledge and understanding their culture and the culture of others (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019).

-***Deficit Thinking/Narrative:*** Putting the onus of academic success or lack thereof on the student rather than the educator or institution. Furthermore, it holds the student accountable for not having access to fundamental resources, lack of familial or peer support, and low drive or performance (Valencia, 1997).

-***Efficacy:*** The understanding by an individual of how to modulate their skills, traits, and emotions to execute a goal (Bandura et al., 1996).

-***Habits:*** Students who engage in daily activities and routines that enable them to become academically organized and achieve their academic goals.

-***Hispanic Serving Institutions:*** Latinx students make up at least a quarter of the student population at an undergraduate institution (Núñez et al., 2016).

-***Historically Black College or University (HBCU):*** A term used to describe the enrollment of primarily Black or African American students at higher learning

institutions. The purpose of HBCUs is to highlight the mission and founding principles of service to the African American community (Howard, 2020).

-***Noncognitive Factors:*** the various factors such as seeking resources and student motivation that ultimately assists a student in being successful (Farrington et al., 2012).

-***Latinx:*** "Latinx as an inclusive term that recognizes the intersectionality of sexuality, language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, and phenotype" (Salinas & Lozano, 2019, p. 310). Furthermore, the term Latinx can be inclusive of all people of Latin American descent. It "represents the variety of possible genders as well as those who may identify as non-gender binary or transgender" (Torres, 2018, p. 284).

-***Persistence:*** a student's ability to maintain a level of academic progress that enables them to have a status of enrolled with the academic institution during their undergraduate career (Burrus et al., 2013).

-***Predominantly White Institution (PWI):*** A term to describe an institution of higher education where the majority enrollment is White (Howard, 2020).

-***Resilience:*** a student that has demonstrated the ability to successfully surmount challenges that could have derailed a student's academic progress (Morales & Trotman, 2011).

Future Chapters

Chapter I has introduced the importance of researching Black and Latinx male collegians. This chapter has also laid out the foundational understanding of my research and provided the context needed to move forward. Chapter II will review the landscape of studies on the topic, reviewing the predictors of student success, more specifically, research on predictors of success for students of color, and ultimately reviewing studies on academic motivation and habits of each population. Chapter III will discuss the qualitative research design, methodology, and methods. The chapter also provides: (a) an explanation of qualitative research, (b) Narrative Inquiry and its methodological fit, and (c) the specific procedures for recruiting, interviewing, and analyzing participant data. I will discuss the measures I have taken to control disabling bias under the *Issues of Trustworthiness* section of Chapter III. Chapter IV will report the findings of this study, highlighting the comparisons and distinctions. The chapter will also explore how the participants' complex identities impact their academic performance. Finally, Chapter V discusses the findings, unpacking distinctions among each group. The last chapter also details: (a) the *Limitations of the Study*, (b) *Future Areas of Research*, (c) *Personal Reflections*, and (d) *Implications for Educational Practice.*

Conclusion

This study addressed all the main points listed above. I was in frequent contact with my dissertation chair, who also served as my methodologist, which ensured that I conducted a rigorous study of high quality and maintained all ethical standards. I have taken extra care to ensure the process is transparent and the procedures are listed clearly in Chapter III. Still, the most important aspect has been highlighting the voices of the Black and Latinx male collegians to aid educators serving in higher education in making wiser decisions when creating resources that assist these populations in achieving high academic outcomes.

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to briefly revisit the question, “What is the significance of this study? And more specifically, why research Black and Latinx, college-aged males?” I ask the reader, while reading this dissertation, to think critically concerning the question below. The upcoming inquiry should not be confused with the main research question or sub-question. Instead, think of this question as a way to further engage with this research on a macro-level. The question below will be revisited and answered in Chapter V, the sections entitled *Future Research* and *Personal Reflections*—

1. What are the broader implications of promoting the formation of a high-performance performance identity for Black and Latinx male collegians?

During an online presentation by Jarvis R. Givens (2023), the author of *Fugitive Pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the Art of Black Teaching*, he conveyed the essence of a line written by Toni Morrison (1987), an American novelist, which I paraphrase here: If one is unable to see a future in the society in which they live, why would they seek to edify themselves in a language that does not serve them or their community? So, drawing inspiration from Toni Morrison, I would ask one final question to reflect on as you read through this dissertation—How can educators design a collegiate experience for Black and Latinx males where they can see a future? Designing and implementing effective strategies, I believe, is the key to both populations seeing a prosperous future that is rooted in the foundation of education. Throughout five chapters, I aim to immerse the readers in this study's literature, methods, and qualitative data. My final aim is to enthrall readers by presenting the narratives of 20 Black and Latinx males that encountered and successfully navigated numerous challenges to fulfill their goals of high academic performance and attaining their bachelor’s degrees.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The challenges and adversity that many students of color encounter present complex and multifaceted issues. Those issues also come with an array of solutions. This chapter will highlight some solutions presented as motivational strategies and habits. Harper (2012) would say that while remedies are helpful, they are not meant to be "prescriptive." D. Byrd (2019) echoes Harper's thoughts, stating his research and recommendations are not a "panacea" to the challenges many higher education institutions currently face in educating a racially and ethnically diverse population. As researchers and practitioners, there is much value in remembering that, especially with this diverse population, there is no "one-size-fits-all" (Barnes & Slate, 2013, p. 2). Intentional methods and targeted solutions to the problems on college campuses must consider the following: an individual's overall preparedness entering the college environment, the collective culture of the students of color being served, and the nuances within those cultures, for example, the way students digest and relate to material and expectations set from their respective high school years (Barnes & Slate, 2013). These considerations should be made when attempting to augment existing practices or implementing new programs to serve students of color (Barnes & Slate, 2013).

Kezar and Eckel (2007) found that one crucial aspect to consider when addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion and supporting the success of students of color is gauging the current state of the culture within the institution. Gauging the culture can provide the following benefits: provide essential information through focus groups and surveys, create a participatory process that engages all members of the community, and open an avenue to communicate an overarching vision and direction for change (Kezar & Eckel, 2007). These considerations, past lessons learned, and potential solutions further the existing intellectual discourse surrounding

issues of how best to serve students of color. The following review of the literature breaks down this large and complex issue into various sections:

- The History of Black Students in Higher Education
- The History of Latinx Students in Higher Education
- The Impact of Intersectionality on Males of Color: Black and Latinx Students
- Barriers to Success
- Defining the Deficit Mindset
- Defining the Anti-Deficit Framework
- Early Indicators of Academic Success
- Motivational Factors for Academic Success
- Cultivating Habits for Academic Success

The first six sections are provided to give essential background so that scholars and practitioners collectively might address the question of "How and why did we get to this point?" Ineffective and effective solutions should be discussed through a solution-oriented lens that seeks to address the problems of inequity encountered in higher education today. The first two sections, *History of Black Students in Higher Education* and *Latinx Students in Higher Education*, ground the conversation and provide context to answer the following questions: What were these populations' relationships with education in America early on? What were their barriers to accessing education? And how did we come to the place we are today with educating students of color in colleges and universities? The third section, *The Impact of Intersectionality on Males of Color: Black and Latinx Students,* provides deeper insight into these specific populations and how they have navigated the higher education system. The fourth section, *Barriers to Success,* discusses the various barriers Black and Latinx students face when pursuing

their educational goals (the internal struggles and societal issues that make attaining a college degree more difficult). My dissertation is grounded in the Anti-Deficit Framework, which will be discussed more below to provide greater insight into the complexities of Black and Latinx students' challenges. However, I would be remiss if I did not include the obstacles that these students are confronted with (both internally and externally) as a basis for understanding them and finding ways to assist them in adapting and overcoming them in their quest to attain a four-year degree.

The fifth and sixth sections, *Defining the Deficit Mindset* and *Defining the Anti-Deficit Framework,* positively reframe the narrative from what is wrong with the student to the ways society can positively impact the lives of students of color. Positive reframing is performed by researching what successful academic students of color are doing right (Harper, 2012). The seventh section, *Early Indicators of Academic Success,* provides a deeper look into the factors contributing to their college academic success. The final two sections delve into the *Motivational Factors for Academic Success* and *Cultivating Habits for Academic Success*. These two sections unearth the internal and external motivating factors, cognitive strategies, and physical habits that students of color utilize. The last two sections discuss the theory and science of motivation and habits. Although the science that helps us understand how motivation and habits trigger behavior is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is included briefly to provide greater context and clarity as to how these factors affect the academic performance of students of color. Ultimately, I hope this study will add to the growing literature on successful strategies that Black and Latinx males engage in and how institutions can implement strategies that replicate successful outcomes within these communities of color.

History of Black Students in Higher Education

My goal in this chapter is for the reader to understand how American citizens have arrived at the state of higher education today. In enacting changes to the U.S. higher education institutions that address present inequities, reviewing the formative moments in history is essential. Scholars have argued that the U.S. has decided to take an "a-historical stance" (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Gamble, 1993). They contend that some individuals believe that current challenges within marginalized communities have nothing to do with the atrocities committed by the U.S. Government and privileged groups over the years. Gamble (1993) and Bonilla-Silva (1997) continue to argue how systemic racism has been treated as the status quo for years without addressing the root cause of those that perpetuate it.

I selected to provide the rich context necessary to have the fundamental knowledge to empower Black and Latinx male collegians in a culturally sensitive and empowering way. These have shaped how Black males and the Black community are currently viewed within the context of colleges and universities. The Black man's journey in education has been embroiled in turmoil since the late 1800s. Black colleges then referred to as "Negro Colleges," faced extreme challenges from the start (Du Bois, 1903). The colleges designed for Black people by the Black community did not have the same degree of financial and social capital that would allow Black students to receive an education that rivaled their White counterparts (Du Bois, 1903). Moreover, there was an ongoing clash of ideologies regarding the skills that would adequately prepare Black students to enter a predominately, and in most spaces at that time, wholly White workforce (Thelin, 2019). Although it seemed progressive at the time, large donations from the White elite fed into a narrative that Black individuals were more suited for manual labor and professions that spoke to physically demanding abilities versus intellectual ones (Thelin, 2019).

A. Brown (2011) discusses three main narratives that have persisted throughout decades in the literature detailing Black males in education: at-risk, consistently underperforming academically; disengaged, lacking interest in educational pursuits; and demoralized, unable to live up to the White standard of masculinity (p. 2048). These emergent themes that have been the narrative thread for generations of Black males have contributed to the "deficit thinking" (a term coined in the 1960s) that peers and educators have used to view this population. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was a landmark case that would forever change the educational landscape (Ash et al., 2020).

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court desegregated schools, allowing Black students to attend White schools for the first time (Ash et al., 2020). However, the government's policy changes and forced integration did not alleviate much of the racial tension that had built up since the nation's birth. In the 1960s, education systems refocused on explaining why some Black students were not excelling in their classes. The introduction of the term "deficit thinking" began to circulate in the early 1960s, which was a way to further discriminate against Black students and redirect the inadequate support and resources of the educational system onto the Black learner (Valencia, 1997). Although deficit thinking was prominent and pervasive for centuries, the term itself was coined in the mid-20th century.

The driving force behind deficit thinking is that the student lacks the cognitive capacity to process educational material fully; therefore, academic success will always be out of reach (Valencia, 1997). Furthermore, a student's education may be affected by parenting or home-life issues that would inhibit learning (Valencia, 1997). The deficit narrative has roots that go deep into the annals of American history and land within the times of Black slavery, mass prejudice, and crimes against the lives of Black people (Austin, 2019). In the 1970s, Gibbs (1973)

published a research study that framed Black males in the following light: “This was another very salient issue, particularly among black males reared in the ghetto, where the overt expression of sexuality and aggression is tolerated.” Gibbs (1973) went on to state: “When black males discovered that the expression of these drives was unacceptable on the campus, they were bewildered and frustrated” (p. 357). Research of this time did not see the Black male community as individuals with different facets to their personalities. Instead, it pushed a narrative that painted Black males as a monolith.

In the mid-1980s, scholars pushed to shed light on the plight of African American males in the educational system (Davis, 1994). Black males began to enroll at a higher rate (Davis, 1994). Black students continued to experience difficulty transitioning into higher education institutions in the 1990s, with slight increases in college enrollment between 1990 and 1991 (Davis, 1994). From the end of the 1980s into the 1990s, the negative view of Black males in education persisted. Past scholars have stated that although there is a definite sense of inequity in society for Black men in their adolescence, other contributing factors—their decision-making—may lead to challenges (Gibbs, 1988). Researchers during this era perpetuated this destructive narrative in the literature and condemned the actions of Black men and how they led to adverse academic outcomes (A. Brown, 2011).

During the 2000s, Black male graduation rates nationally continued to be significantly lower than other racial and ethnic groups (Harper, 2006). Simultaneously, in the early 2000s, research was being conducted to explore how racism can affect Black males, causing mental health issues and creating barriers to academic achievement (A. Brown, 2011). Harper (2012) conducted a national survey to continue the dialogue on Black male academic performance by providing demographic data. His research articulated how Black males had agency in their

education and maintained motivation to graduate through family and peer support, amongst other factors. Harper's (2012) research provided insight into the factors that led to successful academic outcomes for 219 Black male college students. The data, which took an anti-deficit stance, allowed the conversation of Black undergraduate males' strengths to enter mainstream scholarly research (not only cited in Black academic journals).

Throughout the decades, the historical narrative does not fully embody the full range of experiences, talents, and capabilities of Black males in education. As an African proverb states, "Do not let the lion tell the giraffe's story" (Howard, 2013, p. 64). When the conversation is taken out of the hands of those who have gone through the experience and seen through a biased lens, one might question, is the story then worth telling? More recently, those in the academic community have looked into the effect deficit thinking has through a macro lens, with research suggesting that it is embedded within educational systems and rooted in antiquated thinking that is intertwined with the way educators are trained and teach students (Davis & Museus, 2019). Moreover, the past literature has noted that deficit thinking has seeped into all aspects of society, leading to laws and cultures being shaped by toxic narratives around the world (Davis & Museus, 2019). This thinking is so pervasive that it has embedded itself in research practices. Researchers assumed that students of color lacked the capacity to provide a detailed account that would provide researchers with reliable data (Howard, 2013).

Ultimately, it is essential to understand the broader effects of how a deficit mindset in a hegemonic system plagued academia—years of a White narrative dominating the college and university system. A different perspective would allow researchers and educators to find ways to address these more significant systemic issues. How language is used in various media (print, social media, television, movies, etc.) plays a vital role when discussing Black male academic

performance (Davis & Museus, 2019). The use of "at-risk" and coming from a position of lack (time, resources, intellectual capacity) creates a singular view of the Black male that does not support or aid in their academic journey (Davis & Museus, 2019). The existing literature reveals that hegemonic systems perpetuated a deficit narrative by predetermining the outcome: instructors coming in with existing biases that convey to students that they are of low intelligence, then causing students to disconnect from the material, and ultimately leading to poor academic performance (Bruton & Robles-Piña, 2009; Pérez et al., 2017; Shields et al., 2005).

While society still grapples with the effects of years of oppression and disempowerment of the Black male, society and researchers have shifted into increasing the understanding of the Black community and attempting to convey those experiences through an anti-deficit lens. As the Black community became increasingly frustrated with the perpetual state of inequity they faced at their institutions, the situation came to light in the form of protests. The University of Missouri, for example, encountered pushback from their students who protested that their school protected the voices of those who would make derogatory or inflammatory statements that affected them and, therefore, affected their academic performance (Thelin, 2019). The Black communities' relationship with education has been tumultuous; however, one theme across all eras has been their push to gain access to knowledge.

History of Latinx Students in Higher Education

Throughout the years, America's complex and often negative views of the Latinx community created a bevy of challenges and barriers to accessing higher education (Thelin, 2019). While prior policies and structures at colleges and universities made it more difficult to enroll, in states such as Texas and California, Latinx community leaders understood the positive

impact a post-secondary education could have on the lives of individuals (Thelin, 2019). Furthermore, advocates within the Latinx community sought to tear down oppressive systems that would ultimately affect their youth and leave them without opportunities for professional advancement (Thelin, 2019). One group that has excelled academically within the community are Puerto Ricans (Aguirre & Turner, 2004). One contributing factor for Puerto Ricans excelling, and Latinx students in general, are secondary schools emphasizing collaboration with students and parents, focusing on mentorship, and enforcing standards of academic excellence (Stern, 2009). A second factor for Puerto Rican students excelling is their status as U.S. citizens, which allows this population not to have to deal with immigration challenges and have a chance at greater societal mobility (Aguirre & Turner, 2004). Schools focused on areas of excellence produce students equipped with the necessary tools for academic achievement (Stern, 2009).

Clearing institutional barriers for these students of color comes in the form of educators and school administrators making a concerted effort to diversify the makeup of their student population (Ream & Rumberger, 2008). Another group that has made significant achievements in the world of higher education is the Cuban population (Aguirre & Turner, 2004). During the 1960s, the political asylum offered by the U.S. government contributed to their positive academic performance (Aguirre & Turner, 2004). The educational support that Cubans were provided by the U.S., in conjunction with their asylum, allowed Cuban, and eventually Cuban American students, to form a healthy relationship with learning (Aguirre & Turner, 2004).

During the 1960s, grassroots efforts by community leaders, specifically of Puerto Rican and Mexican descent, actively sought reform of a system unfairly oppressing them (MacDonald et al., 2007). The Latinx community leaders took a multilayered approach to address the injustices from educational barriers: they empowered future scholars, invested in grants and

scholarships, and created dedicated spaces that advanced research specific to the Latinx community (MacDonald et al., 2007). The 1970s sparked a countervailing trend of White families responding to the influx of people of color moving into the community by quickly departing. Black and Latinx community members encountered various socio-economic issues stemming from the "White Flight" (White families relocating to suburban areas and leaving cities to prevent from interacting with Black, Latinx, and other communities of color). White Flight left people of color with underfunded businesses, facilities, and educational resources (Morales, 2019). Thus, the underfunding of schools affected students' quality of education, leading to a lack of preparation for college and university life.

A demographic breakdown of the Latinx student community reveals notable differences in college degree completion rates (Sáenz, 2010). Mexican American and Puerto Rican students are enrolling in competitive institutions at higher rates than their Latinx peers (Nuñez & Crisp, 2012). Due to socio-economic challenges, Latinx students often select community colleges as they offer a less expensive option and, at times, better support systems with individualized attention (Stern, 2009; Zell, 2009). The literature has revealed that attaining a four-year degree within the Latinx community is a way to achieve a new level of perceived external success by the collective society, which they can leverage within interpersonal interactions (Zell, 2009).

On average, Latinx students who apply to four-year institutions have a strong academic profile and have attended academically rigorous secondary schools (Stern, 2009). Furthermore, the students' secondary schools have the monetary funds to invest in resources that promote planning for the future and parent involvement (Stern, 2009). Nevertheless, mirroring the journey of the Black community, the Latinx community has been embroiled in battles to gain

access to education. Community activists and students across the nation continue to fight for an equitable education within the higher education system.

The Impact of Intersectionality on Males of Color: Black and Latinx Students

Numerous scholarly perspectives and societal factors that inform intersectionality are explored within this section. Stemming from Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) introduction on the topic, various scholars (Ahmed, 2012; Andersen & Collins, 2013; C. Byrd et al., 2019; Collins, 2009) have provided their critique and expanded the work on intersectionality. Included here are the following subsections: *Intersectionality Defined, Matrix of Domination & The Four Domains of Power Concerning Intersectionality, Intersectionality, Males of Color and Their Multiple Identities,* and *The Broader Implications of Intersectionality Work in Higher Education*.

Intersectionality Defined

The notion of intersectionality can be defined as how the various pieces of one's identity (race, gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, etc.) are interconnected and how they manifest in both our internal and external worlds (Crenshaw, 1991; Goertz & Mazur, 2008). Identity is multifaceted and is affected by macro-level influences that shape life experiences (Collins, 2009). Various aspects of a person's identity can intersect with external influences at the micro-level, prompting different reactions concerning societal power structures (Collins, 2009). Understanding the interplay of various facets of a person's identity and the connection/impact of societal forces is key to intersectionality (Fotopoulou, 2012). The intersectionality framework examines why individuals should explore "multiple identities and how they intersect" within society (Higgins, 2015, p. 125). Moreover, this framework spotlights how society oppresses marginalized identities in favor of dominant ones and the interactions among marginalized groups (Higgins, 2015).

Matrix of Domination & The Four Domains of Power Concerning Intersectionality

The structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains are the four elements that comprise the Matrix of Domination, or MOD (Collins, 2000). Collins (1990) created the MOD framework and applied it through a feminist lens. I will demonstrate in the following sections how MOD can be applied to males of color. Collins's (1990) perspective on systems of oppression was that there was, in fact, an organizational structure to how intersecting oppressions manifested in society. Collins (2000) noted that her framework is discernibly different from intersectionality due to Crenshaw's (1989) focus on intersecting identities marginalized within White systems of power. MOD can also be used to enfranchise marginalized identities and gain knowledge on how to resist oppressive systems (Collins, 2000). Institutional barriers erected to prevent access to community resources for marginalized identities are what MOD underscores (C. Byrd et al., 2019).

As for academic institutions, Ahmed (2012) explored the integration of diversity efforts on college campuses. Mohanty (2003) discussed how the conversation surrounding diversity "bypasses power as well as history to suggest a harmonious empty pluralism" (p. 193). C. Byrd et al. (2019) noted that "this critique is particularly relevant for postsecondary institutions' missions, strategic plans, and recruitment strategies" (p. 6). As institutions have struggled with the concept of diversity, it is essential to note that academia has stripped away the identities of students of color in favor of assimilating them into dominant White culture and ideals (G. Morrison, 2010). MOD has provided an expanded view for students of color and educators to understand how marginalized students navigate their institutions. I assert that Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), in particular, need to reflect on the frameworks of both

intersectionality and MOD critically. By reflecting on the frameworks, they will hopefully grasp the implications of their policies and practices on male students of color.

Four Domains of Power:

As previously stated, Collins's (1990) Matrix consisted of Four Domains of Power. The following four domains provide more insight into the ways people of color encounter oppression:

1. **Structural Domain:** Reveals the intersections of possibilities for people of color, oppressive systems, and institutional powers (C. Byrd et al., 2019). For centuries, people of color have been affected by collusions of power amongst institutions across various resources, for example, schools and media (Collins, 2000).
2. **Disciplinary Domain:** Enacting laws, bureaucracy, and government oversight to discipline and oppress marginalized groups (Collins, 2000). For example, laws and government policies disproportionately affect communities of color, such as attacking Black voting rights.
3. **Interpersonal Domain:** Individuals with different marginalized identities cannot see the impact their identities may have on others; however, they focus on their identities as the most salient concerning others (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) noted: "Oppression is filled with such contradictions because these approaches fail to recognize that a matrix of domination contains few pure victims or oppressors" (p. 287).
4. **Hegemonic or Cultural Domain:** Acts as a consolidation of power that ties together the three previous domains and perpetuates a singular narrative from the dominant groups in society. Vital elements of our collective culture, such as educational curricula, news, and politics, are covertly weaponized to disempower people of color and other marginalized identities (Collins, 2000). Collins (2000) argued that through creating and disseminating

new knowledge and challenging institutional powers through a critical lens, people of color could resist and call attention to hegemonic systems.

MOD and the Four Domains of Power provide a valuable framework to explore the numerous ways institutional powers impact an individual. When applied to education, it opens new avenues for discussion. I argue that educators typically have a base-level knowledge of diversity, equity, and inclusion topics. For example, C. Byrd et al. (2019) discuss how collegiate institutions struggle with critically thinking about the effects of students of color on their campus and instead filter decisions through a White lens (e.g., implementing programs for "all students" that lack cultural and racial considerations into the conception and execution). A lack of knowledge in areas that discuss race and ethnicity can be highly damaging to the academic careers of males of color who already do not receive the degree of institutional support they should. I appreciate how Crenshaw (1989) and Collins (2000) have approached these topics in a meaningful, thoughtful, and critical manner that allows scholars to examine the myriad of ways we are often ignorant of how society engages in and perpetuates an oppressive system.

Intersectionality, Males of Color, and Their Multiple Identities

As intersectionality relates to Black and Latinx males, it is a complicated notion that may defy many individuals' preconceived notions regarding male privilege in society. Although males have positions of power and receive privileges in an array of different areas, men of color, due to their racial and ethnic background, do not receive the same privilege as White males experience (Person et al., 2017). These authors note that the privilege granted by White males is non-transferable due to their racial heritage. Navarrete et al. (2010) examined how males of color, including Black and Latinx males, undergo a unique experience separate from women. Both populations frequently encounter hostility, prejudice, and discrimination issues.

Researchers have found that based on the data on school suspensions, expulsion, and overall discipline, males of color face more difficulties than women of color encounter by a statistically significant amount (Skiba et al., 2016).

One study highlights the difficulties that multiple identities can present. Stevenson's (2019) research sought to hear the experiences of Latinx students. Each narrative from the study provided a glimpse into Latinx experiences while navigating everyday lives on their respective campuses. One participant cited their struggles navigating collegiate spaces and how their darker complexion left them open to racially motivated attacks (Stevenson, 2019). One participant spoke about the differences between members of the Latinx community with a lighter complexion and how it proves to be less of a challenge because they can pass as White (Stevenson, 2019). The examples and research provided have given more insight into the struggles that males of color face and reveal the nuances when accounting for intersectionality. Therefore, it is crucial to consider how Black and Latinx students' identities attempt to thrive academically yet deal with various forms of discrimination.

The Broader Implications of Intersectionality Work in Higher Education

Students of color often feel unheard or as though they have no place within their classrooms or institutions (C. Brown, 2017). Moreover, psychology has researched teachers' negative impact on students of color when embracing attitudes of prejudice or discrimination in the classroom (C. Brown, 2017). Research conducted by Benner and Graham (2013) revealed that students became unmotivated and lost interest in academic achievement when teachers were viewed as unfair in grading practices. Ghavami et al. (2020) suggest that a teacher practicing discrimination against a student will significantly affect their educational outcomes due to the power dynamics present in the classroom. Based on the research, Black and Latinx males in

classroom settings may evoke implicit bias from an instructor leading to academic challenges. Therefore, the intersectionality of being male and a student of color creates a complicated dynamic for the learner.

The intersecting identities of being a male and a Black or Latinx may engender feelings of pride in their heritage, a deeper understanding of self-regarding society, etc. The need for educators to comprehend and acknowledge these identities and unpack them further is vital (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Luft, 2010). Educators should guide students in understanding institutional power and its effect on marginalized identities (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Luft, 2010). The practice of conscious awareness explores how individuals navigate the tension between the identities they hold and the institutional forces they come against helps the learner unpack their emotions, name them, and begin to understand how to address discrimination issues in society successfully (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Luft, 2010; Person et al., 2017).

Barriers to Success

As previously noted, to effectively unpack what makes a student of color successful, it would be beneficial to take a moment to review the various barriers and challenges those students encounter along their academic journey. The following are several challenges that Black and Latinx students encounter and endure throughout their educational journeys.

Challenges in the Educational Pipeline

As colleges and universities grapple with issues of low academic performance, the literature points to challenges surfacing earlier in the educational pipeline. Often, the issues arise as early as middle school and progress into college for Latinx males (Huerta & Fishman, 2014). Latinx students face the problem of underperformance across several traditional academic standards, such as: Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, low course registration in Honors and Advanced Placement courses, and lower grade point average (GPA) concerning other students of

a different racial and ethnic identity (Miller, 2005). When comparing the academic scores of Latinx students against their White counterparts, they are not performing at the same rates of college readiness (Miller, 2005). As scholars unravel the contributing factors to under-preparedness for college, they look to the lack of academic rigor in classes and student grades (Miller, 2005).

Racism, Colorblindness, Stereotypes & Stereotype Threat

As a collective society, we grapple with the effects that racism and other forms of discrimination have on our lives and its impact on educating our youth. Banks and Dohy (2019) noted that research points to poor academic outcomes and a lack of motivation to engage within the classroom stems from racism directed at students of color at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). An article published in *The New York Times* (NYT; 2015) discussed the massive impact that racism is having on campuses across the nation. During an extreme display of racism and hostility, a noose was found hanging at the student center (NYT, 2015). The noose incident led to one racially insensitive email communication from the intuition to all students who spoke about wanting to create a university that was colorblind (NYT, 2015).

Bonilla-Silva (2014) noted the importance of four significant themes concerning colorblind racism: (a) abstract liberalism: an argument that suggests traditional American values, such as hard work and perseverance, are more important than recognizing collective racial equity (Bellah et al., 1985; Bonilla-Silva, 2010), (b) naturalization: the process of White individuals accepting inequity, disengaging in racial discourse, and non-advocacy because it is seen as natural and "just the way things are" (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 28; Manning et al., 2015, p. 12), (c) cultural racism: engaging in harmful rhetoric that reframes social inequities as poor choices on the marginalized group—citing laziness and lack of parental nurturing (Bonilla-Silva, 2010), and

(d) minimization of racism: the belief that people of color are fully responsible for the resources and status they hold. The four themes are embedded within the U.S. White perspective on colorblindness and how every human navigates through the world (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; C. Byrd et al., 2019).

Participating in systems that strip away others' racial and cultural identities perpetuates racism by ignoring the damaging effects on marginalized populations (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Moreover, a White-dominated system that neglects to understand the full implications of various economic, environmental, and health policy decisions will continue negatively affecting communities of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). When applying a colorblind perspective to college institutions, institutions typically fail to understand the impact a particular decision (e.g., choosing to have a lack of culturally diverse literature available) can have on their students of color. Meaningful yet straightforward choices about what food to serve–e.g., failing to include culturally diverse food in the dining hall–could adversely affect essential factors like a sense of belonging. When students fail to see themselves represented in a range of topics from literature to food, I believe it may prompt them to disengage and make them feel misunderstood due to a "colorblind" mentality. The literature reveals that students of color at PWIs who achieve academic success have to balance navigating issues of discrimination; it proves to be more difficult to handle due to a lack of support from White peers and educators (Carter Andrews, 2012; Ford et al., 2008).

In the Black community, some factors contributing to academic challenges are the underrepresentation of Black students, a lack of staff and faculty of color, and consistently being stereotyped (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). Black students frequently encounter educators that underestimate their intellectual capabilities, which leads to a lack of investment and time in

growing their academic skillset (Harper & Davis, 2012). Aronson et al. (2002) discussed a phenomenon called stereotype threat—a psychological disturbance causing a student's hyperawareness regarding negative perceptions of their cultural background during an intellectual task. Stereotype threat produces elevated stress levels for fear of reinforcing a particular negative stereotype to others (Aronson et al., 2002). Taylor and Walton (2011) discussed the degree to which stereotype threat affects a student's ability to perform academically. Stereotype threat affects students' sense of psychological safety in the classroom, leading to poor test performance and heightened anxiety (Taylor & Walton, 2011).

Researchers found that establishing a safe learning environment is key when teaching students of color (Taylor & Walton, 2011). When assessing memory recall during an academic lesson for Black participants (conducted in a psychologically safe environment vs. a non-psychologically safe environment), one study found as much as a 60% decrease in the participant's ability to retrieve the information (Taylor & Walton, 2011). The study above demonstrates the significant impact of stereotype threat in educational environments for students of color. Guyll et al. (2010) suggest that peers, faculty, and staff may immediately pick up cultural differences in Latinx students. The students may strongly feel the effects of stereotype threat if they closely connect with or demonstrate traits from their heritage (Guyll et al., 2010).

Challenges of a First-Generation College Student

Another barrier comes in the form of identifying as a first-generation college student. First-generation college students comprise just under one-third of all college students in the nation (Ramos, 2019). However, just over a quarter of first-generation students can handle the academic rigor and graduate on time (Ramos, 2019). It complicates their ability to thrive academically due to their parents not being well-versed in collegiate life, thus leading to the

student navigating those challenges alone or seeking out resources (Ramos, 2019). Corrigan (2003) indicated that in the U.S., there is a multitude of obstacles for first-generation students to surmount, e.g., insufficient institutional support, and the demographic makeup of this population is mainly Black and Latinx students (Corrigan, 2003). Research has shown that this population is more reticent to ask questions that clarify or aid their learning and shy away from engaging with faculty members (Soria & Stebleton, 2012). Black and Latinx male students tend to shy away since they have trouble expressing their needs.

Issues with expressing needs are evident through Havlik et al.'s (2017) research that suggests that first-generation college students who do not possess the language to articulate their needs to staff and faculty at institutions can significantly impact the resources they are provided (Havlik et al., 2017). Furthermore, these students could not call on their family members' support since they had never had to successfully navigate a college campus, making it difficult for first-generation students to adapt (Havlik et al., 2017). Moreover, the lack of foundational skills (due to their family members never attending college) contributes to this population being underprepared, having low academic performance, and having higher percentages of first-generation students dropping out (Boggess, 2020). Comprehending how first-generation students navigate college is vital since they do not have their parents' experiences on which to rely. Educators, therefore, should have a firm understanding of a student's motivations, and effective habits may help offset the challenges outlined in the research.

The Problems Associated with "Acting White"

The other aspect that sometimes acts as a barrier is apathy toward learning. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) described how and why apathy from students of color emerged through the following: lack of access to educational opportunities, persistent degradation, and societal belief

by the dominant White group that people of color did not possess the cognitive capacity to learn past basic skills, and a lack of positive reinforcement to help them engage with learning (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Challenges and barriers to access are still present today (A. Brown, 2011; Havlik et al., 2017; Strayhorn, 2009). Current challenges prompt students of color to form a negative attitude toward education, leading to unsuccessful academic outcomes (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Harper & Davis, 2012). For Black students, producing successful educational results can be perceived by some in their peer group as "Acting White." The notion of "Acting White" may discourage some Black students from achieving in school (Harper & Davis, 2012).

Carter (2006) discovered that Black and Latinx students, however, encounter the challenge of being accepted by their peer groups while code-switching. The students code-switching is done to be perceived by faculty and staff as academically capable (Carter, 2006). The act of code-switching is described as "cultural straddling" —one's ability to successfully navigate the norms of another culture while being firmly rooted in their heritage and sense of self to succeed in their studies (Carter, 2006, p. 308) academically. Students who can "Act White" while also being able to maintain relationships with members of their community demonstrate an understanding and respect for their group's cultural norms (Carter, 2006). These "cultural straddlers" are the students who can thrive in multiple contexts (Carter, 2006).

The conversation regarding the value of education for Black and Latinx males is complex and multi-layered, yet it is paramount to spawn new research. Due to research commonly lacking in sifting through cultural differences, there is a necessity to reiterate these groups are not a monolith. I would argue that various degrees of academic engagement from both communities on the educational spectrum range from fully engaged to academic disengagement, much like any other racial or ethnic group. I acknowledge that the topics of disengagement amongst this

population and not characterizing an entire group create some tension. However, humans and cultures are complex and multi-faceted. I believe that "cherry-picking" anecdotes that do not delve into the depths of a particular subject or population do a disservice. Viewing Black and Latinx individuals through a holistic lens that acknowledges the challenges, successes, struggles, and triumphs is what has been missing throughout the literature. Therefore, when engaging with these marginalized populations, I find it essential not to reduce their talents and abilities to a quick deficit-laden talking point.

Due to the rich and profoundly entrenched history associated with the Black community advocating for their educational rights, it would serve educators and scholars alike to remember the long-standing battle that many people of color have faced. Black and Hispanic communities have fought to create educational spaces (Historically Black Colleges and Universities [HBCUs] and Hispanic Serving Institutions), endured defending their cognitive abilities, and still managed to produce successful community leaders (Evans, 2008; Morales, 2019; Thelin, 2019). The research over the centuries has effectively "othered" communities of color in the literature (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). The academic discourse has addressed issues of educational access over the years and can begin to be more inclusive by discussing these matters in a more refined fashion.

Lack Financial Resources

Yet another barrier for Black and Latinx students is financial resources and low financial literacy. Without students receiving guidance on how to attain funds to continue their education (e.g., how to fill out their Free Application for Federal Student Aid [FAFSA], they fall in jeopardy of dropping out due to financial hardships (Banks & Dohy, 2019). A lack of financial resources continues to be a significant issue for students of color that affects their motivation to

maintain college enrollment despite institutions' attempts to provide assistance and support (Davis-Kean et al., 2012; Sánchez et al., 2010).

The Challenges of Machismo and Masculinity

Although masculinity and machismo can be internalized and expressed differently, they can sometimes create additional obstacles for students of color to surmount. Past research from Diaz-Guerrero (1955) defines machismo as males of Latino descent who struggle with a range of self-identity issues. One example would be the following: a man expiring shame, loss of confidence, and other insecurities. An inability to regulate emotionally presents problems and effectively prompts a defensive response (Diaz-Guerrero, 1955). Researchers over the decades have suggested that embodying a machismo persona involves Latinx males focusing on attaining success through exemplifying traits such as wielding power and being forceful in pursuing their endeavors (De La Cancela, 1981; Rodriguez & Gonzales, 1997; Torres et al., 2002). Diaz-Espinoza (2017) contends that how machismo manifests in Latinx males can have positive and negative consequences aiding in their motivation to pursue a degree or dissuading them, thereby making this phenomenon critical to academic success (Diaz-Espinoza, 2017).

While Latinx males struggle with machismo, Black males endure a similar issue when managing the toxic effects of masculinity. Harris (1995) suggests Black men struggle with the White ideals of what it means to be a man in America. He discusses how they are deeply affected by systemic racism and issues with accessing education. The researcher stated, over time, that masculinity and the definition relating to Black men morphed into a focus on violence and hyper-sexualization of the opposite sex. Harris (1995) suggested the focus on violence was in response to their internal emotions—anxiety and societal frustration. Hooks (2004) argues that masculinity is revealed in a stereotypical fashion via media and has a consistent message that

depicts Black males as hypermasculine and uninterested in pursuing educational prospects. By young Black males consuming these messages via the media, they potentially can begin to act in accordance, thereby leading to academic issues (Bonner, 2000).

Dancy (2011) interviewed male participants from an HBCU, who stated that they found it difficult to achieve academic success while dealing with the competing expectations from their Black male peers and the larger Black community to project a tough persona. The literature has argued that difficult decisions lie before men of color. Some decisions Black and Latinx male students encounter are discovering how to be respected in society by any means necessary. Other males from both groups attempt to attain a degree (Bitsóí et al., 2014). The educational path for many men of color comes with numerous uncertainties regarding navigating the higher education system, limiting their growth opportunities (Bitsóí et al., 2014).

Defining the Deficit Mindset

Although this dissertation touches on the deficit mindset and how it has permeated all facets of education for students of color, this work does not intend to perpetuate that mindset or contribute to this systemic issue. This scholarly work aims to dive deeply into the tools, skills, and connections involved in producing successful academic outcomes within the Black and Latinx male populations. At the inception of this dissertation journey, I sought to contribute to a larger body of work. I wanted to contribute work that adds texture to the conversations regarding the intentional development of Black and Latinx males. In Chapter IV, based on the qualitative findings that speak to shared goals concerning their education, there is often a palpable feeling and visceral reaction to experiencing the moment of college degree attainment. Within this dissertation, I provide the necessary contextual information to arm scholars and practitioners

with the essential vocabulary to proceed in this ongoing dialogue amongst the scholarly community.

Strayhorn (2009) discussed the views that some peers and faculty hold towards Black males: they "hold beliefs about African Americans as lazy, dangerous, and uneducable; minorities are generally not viewed as gifted" (Strayhorn, 2009, p. 377). Austin (2019) noted that when hearing a colleague talk to a student, "It doesn't matter if I use a drill and drill the information into your brain, you will never understand it" (Austin, 2019, p. 6). Those two examples reveal both the implicit and explicit messages that students receive. Categorizing students through the lens of a deficit mindset strips them of the ability to connect to academic material in a meaningful way and demoralizes them by reinforcing negative stereotypes. Looking at our nation's history, we can see that the deficit mindset in education has spanned centuries (Slater, 1994). Black individuals did not gain access to higher education for the entire duration of that span of history due to the belief they were intellectually incapable (Slater, 1994). During that time, educators and society considered the Black community inferior and undeserving of opportunities usually reserved for White individuals.

As the Black community struggled with receiving an equitable and accessible college experience, their journey paralleled the challenges the Latinx community faced. The deficit narrative persisted throughout the decades, even as enrollment increased. This review of the literature would be remiss if it did not acknowledge that despite the ongoing deficit narrative throughout the centuries, African American and Latinx students have surmounted the obstacles and enrolled in top-tier universities. Thus, struggling to gain access to prestigious institutions reinforces the notion that they "need to work twice as hard" as their White peers. While much in American history has disenfranchised the Black and Latinx communities, especially regarding

education, there have still been those who have exemplified resilience despite the deficit narrative that has persisted in America (Flores, 1992).

One researcher discussed the impact that the deficit mindset will ultimately have moving forward: “If educators continue to be ignorant of, ignore, impugn, and silence the cultural orientations, values, and performances styles of ethnically different students, they will persist in imposing cultural hegemony” (Gay, 2018, p. 33). Gay (2018) went on to state that the continuation of these attitudes would lead to “personal denigration, educational inequity, and academic underachievement upon them” (p. 33). As the previous examples illustrated, it would behoove the nation to move beyond a deficit narrative and redirect its energy and attention to methods to help Black and Latinx male students thrive.

Researchers and educators can get a temperature for the state of education by unpacking the various pieces that collectively create barriers for Black and Latinx male students. When left unaddressed, these pieces coexist and can amount to severe challenges for these populations. Acknowledging the issues is the first step in forming a healthy dialogue between students and educators, so they feel heard. Due to an abundance of deficit-oriented research, I find it essential to hold the difficulties these Black and Latinx male students experience on the one hand and acknowledge areas they thrive on the other. Producing research that embodies a sense of cultural competence and sees each student as their whole-self accounts for their storied life is another layer that continues shifting the deficit narrative. We are entering a new era of research that moves away from deficit thinking. The literature, however, could use additional research that delves into the strategies, aspirations, and cognitive processes that drive success in students of color. Research that considers cultural heritage and a person’s racial and ethnic makeup is paramount to creating more inclusive research.

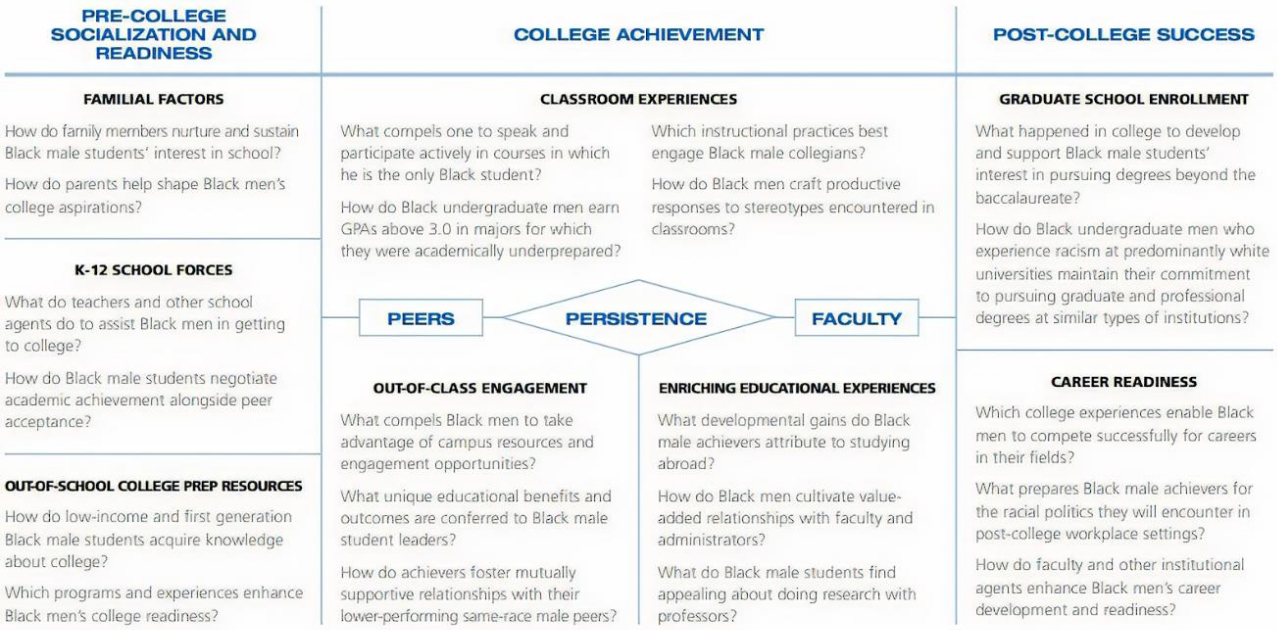
Defining the Anti-Deficit Framework

Harper's (2012) Anti-Deficit Framework changes the deficit narrative that has harmed students of color for centuries. It was not until recently that researchers looked at this issue through the lens of an Anti-Deficit Framework [ADF]. Harper (2012) defines ADF as: "The framework inverts questions that are commonly asked about educational disadvantage, underrepresentation, insufficient preparation, academic underperformance, disengagement, and Black male student attrition" (Harper, 2012, p. 5). The framework takes questions such as: why do Black male students not attend supplemental class instruction, and are reframed to ask—what drives Black male students who engage in supplemental classes to attend? Although Harper's (2012) ADF was created with Black students in mind, I find it relevant and applicable to the Latinx male population.

Figure 2.2 on the next page is Harper's (2012) Anti-Deficit Framework. Although his model focuses on Black students, based on the extensive success factors covered, I believe it is applicable to Latinx males. Below are some examples of how ADF can be utilized regarding questions that advance research on the two populations in positive and meaningful ways.

Figure 2.2

Anti-Deficit Framework



Note: Used with Permission. Anti-Deficit Framework from "Black male success in higher education: A report from the national Black male college achievement study," by S. Harper, University of Pennsylvania. Copyright 2012 by The Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania.

The questions in the figure above convey a sense of resilience, aptitude, and resourcefulness on the student's part. Each question also gives an implicit message of recognizing students' academic abilities and leadership beyond the classroom. All the questions have a positive connotation that underscores a student's strong ability to succeed both in and outside the classroom. The figure guides educators to empower Black and Latinx male students and support them in their academic and extracurricular pursuits.

Harper's (2012) Anti-Deficit Framework addresses a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the talents students of color bring to campus. The framework addresses multiple factors such as college preparedness, extracurricular and co-curricular experiences, post-graduate opportunities, etc. The ADF framework acknowledges various parts of the student's experiences

and identity as a college-going individual, which ungirds my main research question. ADF informed the questions asked of Black and Latinx students during the individual interviews, which provided a strength-based view of their achievement.

Early Indicators of Academic Success

When looking at the key factors that allow a student to succeed academically, I found that the literature pointed to pre-college experiences. I discovered through my findings, which will be discussed further in Chapter IV, focusing on stimulating educational experiences as a contributing factor of success for both populations. Instilling a college-going mindset, pre-college experiences, and early parental involvement begins to drive a student toward an achievement-oriented perspective. Seeds planted early in their academic careers allow them to be open to future educational prospects. The following research unpacks what the literature suggests to be significant factors contributing to a college student's success before they ever think to enroll.

Pre-College Experiences

Existing research demonstrated pre-college experiences, particularly experiences rich in intellectual stimulation, challenging, and demand academic excellence) are significant in achieving collegiate academic success (Adelman, 1999, 2006; Arbona & Nora, 2007; Cabrera et al., 2005; DesJardins et al., 2002; Ishitani, 2006; Nora et al., 2005). Current research from Johnson (2019) further backs up the aforementioned findings by noting the benefits of attending high schools or pre-college programs. The benefits of attending stem from academic excellence and academically demanding instruction: classes that provoke critical thinking and creativity train students on how to write, preparing them for college-level coursework (Johnson, 2019). The importance of pre-college experiences for Black and Latinx students is rooted in learning from

their White counterparts and understanding how to navigate their cultural norms, e.g., vernacular, expectations, unspoken rules, etc. (Johnson, 2019).

Sanchez et al. (2012) found that pre-college experiences were an integral part of the process for Latinx male college students. Due to their family members being unfamiliar with the preparation needed to apply to colleges, pre-college experiences in the form of programs or guidance through high schools allow them to distill the crucial aspects of the application and enrollment process (Sanchez et al., 2012). The male student participants stated this support ultimately led to their success in selecting a college environment where they could thrive (Sanchez et al., 2012). Thus, pre-college experiences provide this population with the foundation needed to adapt to the rigors of collegiate life ahead.

Early Parental Involvement

Epstein (1996) sought to tease out the essential pieces of parental involvement and created six different elements. Three of the six elements of Epstein's (1996) framework consist of: (1) parenting the child–providing guidance and affection; home-based learning–nurturing the child's talents and abilities; and communication–forming a bridge between the school and parent to increase support and knowledge. The three additional elements are: volunteering–being present in the child's school activities and functions; decision-making within the school–engaging in the school's policy creation and decision-making body; and community collaboration–serving the larger community with resources that help children access learning tools (Epstein, 1996).

Additional research found that parents involved in their child's educational journey steer and encourage the child to seek college as a logical next step (Gándara & Moreno, 2002; Lareau, 1987, 2000; McDonough, 1997; Perna & Titus, 2005). The existing literature highlights that

students are more prepared to handle the rigors of college coursework due to parents being actively involved (Lee, 1993; Muller, 1993; Zick et al., 2001). Bogenschneider and Mills (1999) noted that regardless of a parent's educational background, successful academic outcomes can be tied to them taking an active role in their child's educational journey. Past research discovered regardless of the socio-economic status (Shaver & Walls, 1998) and racial background of a student or parent, involvement in a student's early education aids in their academic success (Mau, 1997; Sanders, 1998; Villas-Boas, 1998).

Each of the early indicators provides insight into the following: (a) strategies that should be implemented early on with Black and Latinx students and (b) how to identify students who were exposed to early resources and leverage them to their example. For example, understanding that parents played a prominent role in their educational journey can be a motivator—making parents proud or relying on them during challenging moments. The literature provides helpful examples (such as enrolling students of color) in pre-college programs. However, the research does not elaborate on effective methods that can be implemented to direct students to success. Although academic rigor is discussed, for example, the exact type of assignments that are culturally engaging and appropriate for these populations are frequently absent from the discussion.

Motivating Factors for Academically Successful Students

While unearthing the personal narratives of Black and Latinx students pulled from the existing literature, I found repeated themes that proved to be the most salient throughout the collection of data in the research. As with most topics, the area of motivation has much depth and is far-reaching. Therefore, there are additional motivational factors, such as learning a culturally diverse curriculum, improving socio-economic status, career prospects, etc., that I

decided not to include. Additional factors are not mentioned because they begin to move away from the core focus of this research. I honed in on the factors that were repeatedly cited in the literature as the main contributors to academic success.

Due to cultural differences, the research discovered White students are impacted and respond to assistance from college resources differently from Black and Latinx students (Kuh et al., 2008). Overall, the topic of motivation and its applications to academic performance is a vital piece to the equation in supporting students of color. Gray's (2017) research findings state that once students have a foundational understanding of the topic they are learning, they typically need to utilize motivation to persist (Gray, 2017). For example, if an advanced English course student writes a paper, they may understand the basics of writing composition. However, to write at an exceptional level with analysis and critique, they will need the motivation to execute the task, which will require more work. As I continue exploring multiple ways motivation can affect an individual, the central focus continues to be on how to aid students in achieving their academic goals.

Self Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000) is grounded in the specific needs of an individual's psyche. Autonomy, relatedness, and competencies are the foundation of SDT and the driving forces behind an individual's motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2012). SDT also notes creativity and performance outcomes stem from the three pillars of the framework (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2012). The following serve as the definitions of the three pillars or psychological needs of SDT:

-**Autonomy:** a sense of intrinsic motivation driven through an individual's perceived feeling of control regarding processes and execution (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

-**Relatedness:** an individual's desire to form significant relationships with others (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

-**Competence:** a desire to engage in the acquisition of knowledge and mastery and attain feelings of being intellectually or physically capable (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Skewes et al., 2019).

Self Determination Theory (SDT) has been widely discussed, thoroughly examined, and the centerpiece of motivational theories for over three decades (Ryan et al., 1997; Vallerand, 2021). When unpacking SDT, the theory can be described as an individual's intrinsic motivation fueled by a sense of seeking to understand themselves and expand their abilities through rigorous conquests of their choosing (Deci et al., 1991). Their studies have proposed that college achievement and a student's intrinsic motivation are linked (Côté & Levine, 1997; Stage, 1989; Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992). SDT recognizes the need for an individual to be autonomous yet has their abilities affirmed and supported by others (Deci et al., 1991). Nevertheless, it was acknowledged by the theory's founders, Deci and Ryan (1985), that an individual's motivation is on a spectrum (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The notions of intrinsic versus extrinsic do not adequately describe the full breadth of intricacies involved in a person's cognitive processes (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Organismic Integration Theory (OIT) was born out of the research conducted by Deci and Ryan (1985) and spoke to the idea of the continuum of motivation. Ryan and Deci (1985) realized that within SDT, there needed to be a sub-theory that explained the nuances involved in the human experience of motivation. OIT, on one end of the continuum, begins outside the self (external) and spreads across to the opposite end–inside the self (intrinsic); it demonstrates the

full range of variables and emotions involved (Jones et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Within OIT, there are four forms of regulation:

1. **External regulation**: external factors that drive a person's motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000).
2. **Introjected regulation**: a person intrinsically motivated by the weight of the following: external situations, external actors, or perceived external status (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000).
3. **Identified regulation**: a person participating in a particular action due to understanding the rewards associated with it; however, internally begins to see the benefits of a proposed action and decides to willingly engage (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000).
4. **Integrated regulation:** an individual understands the importance of merging an action or habit with their identity, willingly utilizes it, and feels it is now in alignment with their core beliefs (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Zusho and Kumar (2018) contend SDT does not provide the full depth necessary to significantly explore the complexities of race and ethnicity due to limited research conducted on marginalized identities (Usher, 2018). Usher (2018) argues that current motivational research applies a White standard to people of color without evidence of it working for other populations. His point is furthered by underscoring how White males have silenced the voices of all other individuals by basing the entirety of their research on their race (Usher, 2018). I propose the contrast seen in the motivation of student racial and ethnic groups would be due to a variation in response to external stimuli within their academic environments. For example, students of color respond to a lack of role models of color, a lack of a culturally diverse curriculum, etc., that

could demotivate them. Therefore, those considerations were considered upon selecting the factors below. As an individual can be motivated in multiple ways, I found it advantageous to provide greater context to the study, focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that drive students to achieve at the highest levels. The factors discussed within the *Intrinsic Motivational Factors and Extrinsic Motivational Factors* sections will be listed in this chapter in a binary fashion, internal and external, versus a continuum.

Researchers in the past two decades discovered that applying SDT to students of color may provide a cultural lens through which scholars can begin to examine issues of motivation (Cokley, 2003; Flowers et al., 2003). Cokley (2003) and Flowers et al. (2003) argue this point because they contend that SDT explores two crucial aspects: control and the sense of self. However, Nathan (2017) argues that individuals who are historically oppressed and marginalized cannot rely on grit to persevere. The researcher continues to assert that since motivation is complex and affects people in numerous ways, it is vital for researchers to remember how inequality factors into the equation (Nathan, 2017). Grit or self-determination may continue to perpetuate a White understanding of motivation and harm our students of color in its application. A "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" approach is not helpful or applicable to Black and Latinx populations that may not have the same privileges as their White peers. The research over the years has not recognized how oppressive systems can cause additional challenges that White students do not encounter (housing, food security, transportation, etc.). If a male student of color is working one or two jobs to pay tuition, there is only so much "effort" or "bootstrapping" one can do before their performance is affected by the law of diminishing returns.

Black and Latinx male students can still benefit from the foundational beliefs of SDT. However, it needs to be applied in a culturally sensitive way. Acknowledging the student's

circumstances, allowing them to voice their frustrations, and empathizing with them act as a first step to addressing their problems (Nganga et al., 2019). After an acknowledgment, providing culturally appropriate resources that consider their financial constraints, family obligations, and other beliefs can begin to remedy the issues. An example is, recommending an on-campus work-study that is flexible to family commitments and removes transportation and related costs as a barrier. Educators can practice ethnocultural empathy if there are limited options due to the student's specific circumstances. Wang et al. (2003) define ethnocultural empathy as "empathy directed toward people from racial and ethnic cultural groups who are different from one's ethnocultural group" (p. 221). Hughes (2017) found that educators who sought to understand and show care through ethnocultural empathy motivated students academically.

Intrinsic Motivational Factors

Goal-Oriented

Locke and Latham (1990) coined the term "goal-setting theory." They defined it as an individual's performance being favorably affected by selecting a precise and powerful goal that adds enough necessary stress that drives them to accomplish a realistic goal (Locke & Latham, 1990). In addition, Locke and Latham (2013) discussed how a goal could spark motivation, force the individual to create innovative solutions, and ultimately affect performance when a healthy amount of stress from the task is introduced (Locke & Latham, 2013). Griffin (2006) discovered that students who gravitated towards goals that would produce success through role-modeling for their community evoked positive feelings from family members, and plans for their future careers were often associated with successful academic traits (Griffin, 2006). Goal setting proved to motivate them to succeed, producing positive results that would boost their sense of self-worth and aid their career plans. Past research concluded that regarding goal mastery (a student seeking

to be well-versed in the subject or skill), there was a significant link between goal mastery and academic performance (Hsieh et al., 2007; Miller et al., 2021).

Combating Negative Stereotypes

Dealing with perpetual stereotyping from peers, staff, and faculty at their institutions, students of color have developed positive coping strategies to combat the oppressive narrative placed upon them. Harris et al. (2011) revealed that Black male participants drew strength from "proving people wrong" and applied that to creating positive academic results (p. 54). Griffin (2006) found that the stories of Black students from their institution divulged negative perceptions from the school community (being lazy or unequipped to deal with the academic rigor of college) in comparison to their non-Black peers (Griffin, 2006). The students were motivated by these disparaging views from their college community. They addressed these negative stereotypes by intentionally taking steps to disprove these notions, for example, by showing up early, being more engaged in class discussions, etc. (Griffin, 2006).

The literature frequently discusses the topic of over-achievement in reaction to negative stereotypes (e.g., Boyd & Mitchell, 2018; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Harper, 2006; McGee, 2015). Turochy et al. (2021) discuss a similar reaction among Latinx students to produce quality work in the face of discrimination. Black male students adjusted to stereotyping on their campuses by creating a mindset honed in on being academically sound and thriving to accomplish major academic feats (Harris et al., 2011). The issue of "Acting White" can be addressed in constructive ways. The research found that HBCUs can help since students are surrounded by people they can racially identify with (Goings, 2016). At PWIs, creating and nurturing groups with shared racial and cultural identities offsets the negative stereotypes of academic achievement (Johnson & McGowan, 2017). The majority of research, however, stops

short of naming the institutions' role in perpetuating these harmful stereotypes and strategies to support these populations. Brady et al. (2016) also found that for Latinx students, self-affirmations could be another coping mechanism to offset the adverse effects of stereotyping.

Extrinsic Motivational Factors

Extracurricular/Co-Curricular Activities

Research conducted by Fischer (2007) revealed the degree to which Black and Latinx male students engage throughout the numerous activities and functions at the collegiate level contributes to their overall success (Fischer, 2007). Except for White students, research revealed that high academic performance for students of color was highly correlated with engaging in on-campus activities (Fischer, 2007). Calderón (2018) found that when students of color actively engaged in on-campus organizations, it allowed them to identify the group as an emotional resource and draw support when needed (Calderón, 2018). Martin et al. (2013) noted that high motivation levels toward academic performance were attributed to student involvement in extracurricular activities, as found by the National Education Longitudinal Study (Martin et al., 2013). It motivated students academically because of the overarching purpose and significance it armed them with by being a part of something larger (Martin et al., 2013).

When reviewing the connection between co-curricular activities and academic performance, such as internships, Binder et al. (2015) and Mansfield (2011) discovered a positive effect. Recent research uncovered the effect digital badging has on student performance. The relatively recent concept of digital badging can be described as a co-curricular activity designed to supplement in-classroom learning and motivate students toward achieving additional

skills (Coleman, 2018). Abramovich et al. (2013) found that digital badges focused on mastery of the subject motivated successful students (Abramovich et al., 2013).

Sense of Belonging

Prior research suggested that participating in various extracurricular activities aided students of color's sense of belonging and attachment to the campus community (Fischer, 2007). Calderón (2018) revealed that the feeling of belonging at student institutions is a fundamental necessity while attending (Calderón, 2018). Additional literature suggests a contributing factor for Black students, which can be used to gauge a sense of belonging on campus, is "cross-racial interactions" (Strayhorn, 2014). Haywood (2017) suggests that the feeling of belonging for Latinx students, in particular, is activated when schools that strive to create spaces that acknowledge this population (not only in name) but resources act as a positive force in allowing this group to feel seen. Recent research by Garcia Reyes (2021) discussed how cultural programming that Latinx cultural centers produce helps Latinx students develop a sense of belonging by further exploring their identities (Garcia Reyes, 2021). Furthermore, their research notes that this program allows students to begin an ongoing dialogue regarding the fight against anti-blackness in college environments (Garcia Reyes, 2021).

Positive & Supportive Interactions

Past literature strongly suggests that a crucial factor contributing to academic success is the relational bonds facilitated by faculty and students (Astin, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). Researchers have discovered a link—between academic achievement and interpersonal relationships between students and support provided by staff (Adelman, 2006; Martinez & Klopott, 2005; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002). When adequate time and relational investment are directed toward students from faculty, it was found that students

thrive academically (Harrison, 2014). Huéscar Hernández et al. (2020) noted when faculty create classroom environments that allow the exploration of students' autonomy and sense of agency via creative and challenging assignments, it will boost their intrinsic motivation and educational investment (Huéscar Hernández et al., 2020). In addition, Pérez and Saenez (2017) found that when Latinx male students in their study sought out meaningful connections with faculty, and when faculty imparted wisdom about the adversity faced in their academic career, students were able to draw motivation from those stories that aided in their success.

Brooms (2019) found that staff and faculty are seen as role models to their students and can motivate students to strive towards academic excellence. The students specifically cited they felt supported most when they received targeted feedback and advice that aligned with their goals, for example, course selection, navigating courses, accessing resources, etc. (Brooms, 2019). The existing body of literature on motivation further solidifies this student claim–the crucial role a supportive environment plays in the development of an individual (Deci, 1980; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2016). For Black males, research suggests that overall appreciation and positive outlook for the college experience stems from the meaningful connections made within their campus communities (Strayhorn, 2008). Each meaningful relationship made with a faculty or staff member can positively influence a student's academic trajectory through introductions in the campus community that fuels feelings of interconnectedness and belonging (Strayhorn, 2008).

Familial Support

Past literature highlighted how it is vital for Black and Latinx male students to draw support from their families during their college years (Oyserman et al., 2002; Russell & Atwater, 2005). For Black students, members of the student's family who modeled success aided in

successful academic outcomes (Palmer et al., 2011). Male Latinx students also attribute part of their success to family and, more specifically, their mothers (Ballysingh, 2019). Furthermore, Latinx males wanted to ensure their mothers were financially supported and spoke to the determination that was modeled for them (Ballysingh, 2019). Role modeling was said to motivate these students, leading to their success in college (Ballysingh, 2019). Brooms (2019) noted that a student's motivation during their academic career was linked to their family's presence and emotional engagement throughout the process (Brooms, 2019).

The existing literature on motivation provided a great starting point to gain knowledge on what drives Black and Latinx male students. The family element for both groups appears to be an integral part of gaining and sustaining motivation. However, a difference between the two groups is that for Latinx students, family serves as the centerpiece of their lives. For Black students, family is a fundamental part but acts as an extension of their lives (e.g., their mothers are praised for helping them, but the familial bond is in the foreground of their pursuits). A reason for how Black and Latinx male students interact with their families differently may be because, in the Latinx culture, they want to act as caretakers to their elders, thereby creating closer and more frequent interactions (Ballysingh, 2019).

In summary, a sense of belonging for Black and Latinx male students is similar yet different. For Black students, interpersonal relationships with students of other races provide a higher impact (Calderón, 2018). For Latinx students, visibility on campus and resources are most important (Calderón, 2018). In addition to being goal-oriented and involved in extracurricular/co-curricular activities, combating negative stereotypes benefits both groups. However, although not explicitly stated about combating stereotypes, there may be a difference in the degree to which this affects both groups. Haywood (2017) discusses how colorism affects

Latinx students. Therefore, darker complexions for Latinx individuals could cause more stereotyping, while lighter complexions (especially those that align more with White phenotypes) may allow for an easier time navigating these issues (Haywood, 2017; Holguín Mendoza, 2021).

Further comparisons between Latinx and Black males are missing from the literature on how cultural differences can create similar yet divergent paths. The research would benefit from conducting an in-depth analysis that examines the commonalities. Then, performing a deeper analysis of the distinctions can divulge critical data needed to determine specific nuances. The reflexive data analysis, which will be discussed further in Chapters III and IV, has helped to tease out the nuances of what produces a Black or Latinx high academic performer in college.

Cultivating Intentional Habits for Academic Success

First, it is vital to understand the very foundation of habits, such as: What are they? How do they work? And how can they be used to produce successful academic outcomes for students of color? As previously mentioned, habits for this study can be operationally defined as: a student, without the need to purposely engage in the decision-making process, automatically acting in response to an "environmental cue," which can be frequent or infrequent (Gardner, 2012, p. 32). Clear (2018) describes habits as essential for one's brain to quickly process stimuli and automatically respond to the stimulus without frequently taxing the brain's cognitive processing power (Clear, 2018). Researchers view habits as more than actions performed repeatedly; habits also activate a process in the brain called automaticity (Verplanken, 2018). Automaticity is "the quality of a behavior or mental process that can be carried out rapidly and without effort or explicit intention" (American Psychological Association, n.d.).

In fact, "the Latin words *essentials*, which means being, and *identiem*, which means repeatedly," were used to create the word identity (Clear, 2018, p. 37). Clear (2018) states that

"your repeated beingness" is what composes an individual's identity and informs what titles you associate with, e.g., student or high performer (p. 37). In essence, students can use their sudden change in environment to embrace new and effective academic habits that produce successful outcomes, thus, forging a new identity. Then the student can embrace a positive self-perception and new identity in college, which is that of an academically strong student.

Carden and Wood (2018) suggest that a significant factor, the habit discontinuity effect, may aid in new positive behaviors and assist a person with successfully transitioning to a new phase and adopting new coping strategies. The habit discontinuity effect provides an opportunity for a person to move beyond negative patterns or old cues due to an interruption caused by a significant change, such as enrolling at a new school (Carden & Wood, 2018). A researcher speaks to a similar phenomenon referred to as constructive disorientation. Wergin (2019) defines constructive disorientation as "a feeling of arousal brought about by a perceived disconnect between the current and a desired state" (p. 57). The individual will eventually realize they can cope with the challenges to achieving their goal (Wergin, 2019).

Wergin (2019) continues to suggest that constructive disorientation must have a few necessary elements: (a) a situation or event that provokes action, (b) an obstacle that is surmountable to serve as a catalyst for growth, and (c) a current lack of skill or resources to achieve the goal, yet the ability to acquire or access them. I would argue that a student entering college or in their final year would be presented with situations that fall under both the habit discontinuity effect and constructive disorientation. Some examples of constructive disorientation are: applying for jobs post-graduation, interviewing, and preparing for graduation. Depending on a student's experience of constructive disorientation, the habit discontinuity effect

may aid or inhibit successful outcomes. The strategies they employ, whether they be motivational or habitual, will be areas that are further explored in upcoming sections.

A full range of habits contributes to a student achieving high academic success; however, similar to the section on *Motivating Factors for Academic Success*. I chose to focus on the main factors that were cited repeatedly in the literature over the past four decades. To unveil the inner workings of how students implement successful habits, I broke up the topic of habits into two sub-categories and provided them with operational definitions. *Cognitive Habits* are students having the emotional plasticity to exercise healthy cognitive strategies—self-soothing, positively reframing a situation, and creating an action plan to address a problem (Freire et al., 2020; Kobylińska & Kusev, 2019). Conversely, I propose that cognitive habit(s) could also lead to a student utilizing unhealthy strategies that can inhibit their growth and produce adverse outcomes. *Non-Cognitive Habits* are the frequent use of physical actions that can be used to execute quality academic tasks or act as an impediment to their goals (Freire et al., 2020; Kobylińska & Kusev, 2019). The two sections below provide the factors that academically successful students utilize for scholastic gain.

Cognitive Habits

Employing Metacognitive Strategies. The process of metacognition involves one's ability to reflect on their thinking patterns, or in layman's terms, "thinking about thinking" (Smith et al., 2017, p. 1). Michna (2011) researched Black, Latinx, and White students to understand metacognitive use in the undergraduate collegiate environment. The results showed favorable academic performance outcomes for Black and Latinx male students that employed this strategy (Michna, 2011). However, the Black and Latinx male students who more frequently utilized metacognitive strategies to their advantage were the students in the study. They felt they

were welcomed and had a stronger connection to their respective ethnic groups (Michna, 2011). Researchers Winne and Nesbit (2010) stated that metacognition proves to be one of the most valuable assets for students when achieving their academic goals—providing them with invaluable insight that aids in learning (Winne & Nesbit, 2010).

Successful students create a mental blueprint when tackling academic work and focus on three different metacognitive strategies to ensure positive results—planning, monitoring, and evaluating (Sholikhah, 2021). *Planning* is when the student applies this metacognitive strategy to ascertain the next steps in the process before engaging in the action. For example, when planning is applied to reading, it generally involves three main activities; pre-reading, whilst-reading, and "post-reading" (Sholikhah, 2021, p. 66). In the planning process, students are directed to strategize before reading the material, assess for main topics during the process, and track supporting information to allow the student to begin to digest the material (Sholikhah, 2021). Englert et al. (1988) found that when examining the tactics students utilize during writing, *monitoring* was used to monitor their thoughts and was a process performed by students who had successful academic outcomes (Englert et al., 1988). Fogarty (1994) stated that forming hypotheses, linking key concepts, and drawing conclusions are essential elements of monitoring (Fogarty, 1994). Finally, the metacognitive skill of *evaluation* allows the student to be appraised for the quality of their work by their instructor (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Zimmerman & Pons, 1986). These skills allow the student to reflect on their work and ways to improve (Black & William, 2009; Zimmerman & Pons, 1986). Smith et al. (2017) proposed that in light of scarce institutional resources, Black students should be given effective strategies that allow them to excel, thereby making learning a more equitable process (Smith et al., 2017). I would, therefore,

suggest instructors provide time within their lessons to teach metacognitive strategies, much like the research concludes, which can only aid academic success.

Practicing Emotional Intelligence. Practicing emotional intelligence refers to a person whose cognitive processing is based on the results of the active management and assessment of internal, external, and interpersonal feelings (Arradaza-Pajaron, 2015). Past research has found a positive correlation between the impact emotional intelligence has on the academic performance of college students (Adeyemo, 2007; Barchard, 2003; Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Gil-Olarte et al., 2006; Lam & Kirby, 2002; Song et al., 2010; Tapia & Marsh, 2006). Emotional intelligence proves to be a key habit to practice because upon the introduction of a new task continuously, it is important for students to practice regulating their emotions since, at first, assignments may be overwhelming or cognitively taxing (Kanfer et al., 1996). Furthermore, emotional intelligence allows a student to figure out healthy responses to challenging situations that might otherwise provoke anxiety and trigger negative coping mechanisms—e.g., alcohol, substance abuse, etc. (Arradaza-Pajaron, 2015).

Self-Talk. The cognitive habit of engaging in affirming self-talk, more specifically, committing oneself, allows students to employ healthy coping strategies enabling them to attain their goals and produce favorable outcomes (Hunter & Sullins, 2020). Padesky and Greenberger (1995) suggest self-talk as a coping mechanism may prompt personal growth in oneself (for example, a person assessing their current situation and being grounded in realism) and through the individual facilitating an empowering internal dialogue (Padesky & Greenberger, 1995). Gardner (1999) found that to address life stressors properly, self-talk could be used as a method that helps individuals work through the tension of competing priorities and aid in strategizing solutions (Gardner, 1999). Researchers have noted that students engaging in self-talk

encouraging in nature can increase overall confidence in their academic abilities; it proves to be an essential component in being well-versed in understanding, assessing, and commanding one's emotional state (Burnett & McCrindle, 1999; Depape et al., 2006; Nelson & Van Meter, 2006).

Non-Cognitive Habits

Exercising Discipline–Deliberate Practice, Time on Task & Mastery. The operational definition I selected for discipline is a student's ability to regulate emotions to execute a specific function and move them toward their academic goals (American Psychological Association, n.d.). In addition, under the area of discipline, there are three subcomponents that students carry out: (a) *Deliberate Practice*, (b) *Time on Task*, and (c) *Mastery*—mastery of skills. *Deliberate Practice* is defined as a student performing or rehearsing a specific assigned task with complete focus, which includes clear parameters and expectations, repetition; furthermore, and receiving targeted feedback that outlines successes, failures, and opportunities for growth (Duckworth, 2018). Past research performed on deliberate practice has revealed a strong link between academic performance and deliberate practice (Frisbee, 1984; Naser & Peel, 1998). Students who engage in more practice on their specific subject or assignment, in conjunction with deliberate practice, allow for deeper comprehension and potentially outperform others (Duckworth, 2018).

Time on Task is the amount of physical and mental energy applied to a particular task to execute a particular objective (Astin, 1984). Research suggests that learners become inundated with potential academic strategies; however, persistent use is key once they discover a unique plan that resonates (Goldstein et al., 2019). Furthermore, the act of repeating their specific strategy ("since there is no one size fits all approach") for a prolonged period is what factors into more favorable outcomes (Goldstein et al., 2019, p. 158). Past research emphasized the energy

allocated to their studies and its role in engaging a student academically, not only physically, but cognitively (Astin, 1984). The degree to which the student exerts energy on a topic allows motivation to achieve their academic goals and the expansion of their skillset (Astin, 1984). Discussing time spent on a task becomes more nuanced when considering the cognitive component. Thus, I propose that creating a habit that pairs deliberate practice and time on task, with consideration to the energy exerted, may lead students to successful academic outcomes.

Mastery is described as a physical and cognitive action involving seeking more profound knowledge about the subject area to apply it in various use cases (Miller et al., 2021). Once a learner has distilled the basic concept of a topic, then the essential piece to mastering a topic is consistent repetition so that retrieval of the information is easily accessible (Fletcher et al., 2015, p. 203). Current research identified that final academic outcomes are connected to the amount of time students spend on a task consistently throughout an academic term (Goldstein et al., 2019). Regarding mastery, there is an overlap between cognitive and non-cognitive habits. The act of "rehearsal, elaboration, and organization, and meta-cognitive strategies that involve activities such as planning, monitoring, and regulating cognition" serve to aid students in the classroom environment, as evidenced by past research (Was, 2006, p. 533).

Practicing Positive Racial Socialization. Practicing positive racial socialization is when students are provided coaching from a parental figure early in their development that discusses the various challenges they may encounter regarding race but frames the conversation in a strength-based way by highlighting positive examples from their heritage versus ones of mistrust (Carter Andrews, 2012). The narratives of racial inequity and the impact it has had on families of color have been at the crux of essential teachings to marginalized youth, thereby instilling a mental framework for constructively adapting to racial stressors (Fischer & Shaw, 1999;

Perez-Brena et al., 2018; Wang & Huguley, 2012). All students of color receive increased levels of confidence in their skills and sense of worth when parents expose them to stories, affirmations, body language, etc., affirming their racial identity (Wang et al., 2020). Positive racial socialization could potentially be a factor by instilling the belief within marginalized students that they are an essential part of the larger community; however, still keeping in mind the reality of racial tensions present within a given space (ten Kate et al., 2017; Richardson et al., 2015). Anglin and Wade (2007) found that Black college students who successfully adapted to their academic environment also learned to draw strength from and positively identify with their racial backgrounds due to their parents' influence.

Fletcher et al. (2015) stated that when considering students from marginalized backgrounds, it is vital to maintain the perspective that the methods of producing successful grades should be prioritized. Methods are vital to this population because it serves, for many students, as their first introduction to how to effectively write, research, and present their ideas in a scholarly manner. One of the main questions that institutions across the U.S. ask is, how can we improve the quality of experience for students of color? Institutions find themselves reflecting on the student experience due to increases in racial and ethnic diversity on their campuses and current social justice movements. As scholars advance the intellectual discourse surrounding the topic of Black and Latinx male students, the literature must be intentional in providing space for research focused on academically successful students. There should be literature that is not prescriptive. The existing literature does, however, suggest how educators and collegiate institutional leaders can cultivate academic success with historically marginalized populations like Black and Latinx male collegians.

Summary

Overall, the existing literature has laid the foundation to discuss the complexities of working with males of color. The views of Black and Brown bodies in America have always been fraught with disparaging and dehumanizing remarks (e.g., Austin, 2019; Flores, 1992; Strayhorn, 2009). There are similarities between Black and Latinx male students found within the literature. The topics that overlap for both groups are:

- They draw strength and motivation from family;
- Encounter issues of racial and ethnic discrimination;
- A large percentage identify as first-generation students;
- Each group deals with the effects of toxic masculinity;
- Rates of institutional punishment for both groups are high;
- There is low college enrollment for each population;
- Each group has historical roots in educational advocacy;
- The majority of each group falls within a low socio-economic status;
- Positive interactions with peers, faculty, and mentors aid in their success.

Each group also has distinct differences. The ways that Black and Latinx male students are viewed by educators and peers and navigate their college experiences at times diverge. The differences among each group are:

- Although the family is essential, Latinx males have stronger bonds with their mothers and use the bond as external motivation;
- Latinx students deal with more issues of colorism within their community;
- Black students with darker complexions encounter more stereotyping and racial discrimination from both faculty and peers;
- Black students have a different history with their status and identity in America than Latinx students dating back to slavery;

- Concerning the sense of belonging, the state's cross-racial interactions appear to be a relevant gauge for Black males. Latinx males feel a sense of belonging through dedicated resources that acknowledge their Latinx identity.

In America, citizens now find themselves dealing with the tension of racial injustice and prejudice. Communities of color seek to shift the narrative from despair to focusing on their excellence. I would argue narratives speaking to community leaders and agents of change (Evans, 2008; Morales, 2019; Thelin, 2019) have contributed to a Renaissance of Excellence for communities of color with scholarly research. Through the Anti-Deficit Framework (Harper, 2012), the literature began to unpack what it means to be a person of color within a predominantly White society and the intricate details associated with thriving despite encountering barriers.

The research on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) has illuminated the minds of scholars and practitioners as to the ways various identities intersect, and through the Matrix of Domination (Collins, 1990, 2000), illustrates how those identities are organized within our society today. The work of these and other scholars has revealed how educators should think about approaching the challenges of supporting males of color on college campuses. The literature on intersectionality and MOD has demonstrated many of the problems within institutions and how they erode the identities of students of color in favor of assimilating them into White culture. I noticed in reviewing the literature on the areas that explore identity that there are many recommendations for potential solutions (C. Byrd et al., 2019); however, these articles do not focus on the step-by-step internal and external processes that males, or students of color in general, employ to be academically successful.

Concerning successful academic strategies, I firmly believe it is essential to delve into the various aspects that make Black and Latinx students academically successful. The use of academic strategies as foundational knowledge aided me in being able to conduct a more thoughtful and intentional data analysis. I will discuss further how the literature informed my data analysis in Chapter III. The literature has argued that topics such as sense of belonging (Calderón, 2018; Fisher, 2007; Garcia Reyes, 2021; Haywood, 2017; Strayhorn, 2014) and positive support and intersections (Astin, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991; Pérez & Saenez, 2017; Tinto 1993) have positive support for students of color. In addition to the topics above, some of the main themes I identified were:

- Familial Support
- Employing Metacognitive Strategies
- Practicing Self-Talk
- Practicing Discipline
- Practicing Positive Racial Socialization

Creating an empathic container to hold Black and Latinx male students' complex identities is vital to helping them become firmly rooted within the college community. Research has revealed that when these populations feel their socio-emotional needs are met and they have a sense of belonging, they can excel academically (Arradaza-Pajaron, 2015; Calderón, 2018; Haywood, 2017). Identity work with students of color serves as the precursor and a catalyst for producing students who can handle the academic rigors of college. The literature has woefully under-researched the notion of Black and Latinx male students and integrating their identities with one of the scholars. When discussed in the literature, academic achievement is discussed and broken down into parts. A crucial piece missing is an overarching vision and framework that

successfully merges the mechanics of the motivation and habit processes with one that discusses the intricate details of being an academically successful student of color.

Harper's (2012) Anti-Deficit Framework was an essential first step to shifting the course of literature and future research in a more empowering direction. I believe, however, there is a significant gap in the substantive knowledge of the concrete steps that produce academic success in college for Black and Latinx male students? And how can those steps be adjusted to accommodate various collegiate settings? When would it be appropriate to suggest activating intrinsic or creating extrinsic motivation? Are there other pivotal moments besides their entry and departure from college that can be conducive to change and skill development? Although not all of these questions will be thoroughly addressed within this dissertation, I hope the findings from the participant interviews continue the dialogue concerning supporting male students of color and better understanding and assessing their needs. By identifying these gaps and continuing this critical dialogue about what produces success, I hope it prompts future research into precise mechanisms that aid academic achievement.

All of the literature thoroughly discusses: power structures (Collins, 2000), intersecting identities (Crenshaw, 1989), and Black and Latinx male students' support and collegiate environment (A. Brown, 2011; Calderón, 2018; Haywood, 2017; Harper, 2012; Pérez & Sáenz, 2017). There has been little to no research that uses Reflexive Data Analysis to examine what factors produce academic success. Although alluded to by Harper (2012) and Duckworth (2018), there has yet to be a culturally responsive approach that focuses on the internal processes that aid in strong academic performance. For example, questions geared toward how they overcame specific challenges during college. Since centuries of research have used White students to theorize and formulate approaches (Usher, 2018; Zusho & Kumar, 2018), it is a logical next step

to thoroughly research effective strategies that would benefit these male students of color. I believe the research community can be more inclusive by:

1. Acknowledging Black and Latinx males' varying identities.
2. Embracing the science behind motivation and habits.
3. Continuing to perform in-depth interviews with Black and Latinx males to construct an internal map of methods that lead to success, which I will discuss more in Chapter V.

I believe a gap exists due to the lack of literature that explores and explains the deeper factors associated with these populations' academic success. Further research that breaks down the critical aspects of a student's ability to thrive in a collegiate environment is fundamental to supporting Black and Latinx male collegians. A solution-oriented and practitioner focus will allow students and educators to implement effective methods to help them thrive. Through this dissertation, I captured the voices of males of color to add them to the growing body of literature to support successful future academic performance.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will provide detailed research strategies and rationale for my selected research method, narrative inquiry. The following topics will be covered in depth:

- **Rationale & Restatement of Research Questions**
- **Defining Qualitative Research**
- **Selected Methodology and Rationale–Narrative Inquiry**
    - Methodological Fit of Narrative Inquiry for Research with Students of Color
- **Methods**
    - Sample Size & Strategy
    - Procedures for Recruitment and Selection
        - Participant Selection Criterion
        - Additional Participant Considerations
- **Data Collection**
    - Use of Unstructured Interviews
    - Individual interviews
    - Field Notes
- **Reflexive Thematic Data Analysis**
    - Researcher's Philosophical Perspective
    - Codes & Themes
    - Code Checking within Reflexive Thematic Analysis
    - Six-Step Process for Coding Participant Responses
- **Issues of Trustworthiness**
- **Ethical Considerations**
- **Summary**

Rationale & Restatement of Research Questions

The United States is undergoing the beginning stages of critical dialogue in American history. As the nation is still reeling from police brutality, blatant racism, and an elevation in virulent conversations (e.g., Patnaude et al., 2021), the discussion about effectively empowering and educating our students of color could not be timelier. Education is the basis of creating motivated, resilient, strategic, and inspired leaders in our society. While there is the aforementioned gender gap in degree enrollment and attainment for Black and Latinx male collegians, I find it imperative to engage in research and effective practices that address these issues. Prior research suggests the contributing factors and habits listed below enable students to thrive academically. The data revealed information to address the gender gap.

As discussed in the literature review, Black and Latinx male students have been historically characterized in scholarly research as highly disengaged from academics. Yet, a growing body of research within the past ten years delves into the aspects of the student experience that contribute to their success, an "anti-deficit perspective" (Harper & Harris, 2010; Sáenz et al., 2016). The literature demonstrates a lack of specific detail on specific strategies that Black and Latinx male students employ. Furthermore, it is necessary to remember that Black and Latinx male students navigate their educational journeys differently (Cabrera et al., 1999; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992). This research will add to the growing body of literature, which seeks to address systemic issues in our higher educational institutions by exploring the following research question and sub-question:

- **Main Research Question:** What are the experiences that make Black and Latinx students academically successful?
    - **Sub-Question:** What are the commonalities and differences amongst each population?

Defining Qualitative Research

I conducted a qualitative research study. Qualitative research intends to collect narrative data that inform the larger research community of an individual's or communities' lived experiences (Teddlie & Abbas Tashakkori, 2009). I utilized a qualitative method because it aligned best with a culturally sensitive approach that, when applied to marginalized populations, aims to take the whole person into account when conducting research (Fassinger, 2005; Morrow, 2007; Suzuki et al., 2005). Qualitative research also provides the opportunity to recommend tailored solutions based on examining the participant's lived experiences (Alvidrez et al., 2008). A qualitative lens may provoke new questions that may lead to a greater understanding of the complexities of the population(s) involved (Alvidrez et al., 2008). When working with students of color, extra considerations are involved. Due to Black and Latinx male students constantly facing oppressive systems and marginalization on their campuses, an approach that acknowledges the entirety of their identity is a supportive and constructive way of researching this population.

Qualitative research provides participants a platform to voice their thoughts and experiences to the scholarly community (Guishard et al., 2005). Another benefit of performing a study focusing on narratives is that it allows the data to be discussed in an accessible way. One example of the benefits is: including colloquial language or cultural references from the participants' communities (White & Dotson, 2009). Qualitative research provided an avenue to give depth and nuance to the conversation. For Black and Latinx male students, my selected methodology created an opportunity to provide crucial data via their narratives that can spark change.

Selected Methodology & Rationale: Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry explores the layers of stories associated with the experiences of an individual (McIssac Bruce, 2008). Researchers employ a narrative methodology to reveal and examine the full breadth of experiences individuals bring with them through their rich personal history (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Researchers (e.g., Adams, 2008; Coulter & Smith, 2009; McIssac Bruce, 2008; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007) state humans have an innate desire to communicate, reflect and understand the events we endure in life. In conjunction with the participant, a narrative approach dissects the meaningful experiences within their life. This methodology allowed me, as the researcher, to create space for the participants to give authentic and deep responses. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argue, "in understanding ourselves and our students educationally, we need an understanding of people with a narrative of life experiences" (pp. 2–3).

Within Narrative Inquiry, researchers examine the stories of participants using three dimensions:

1. Temporality
2. Sociality
3. Spatiality

Temporality grounds the research with a sense of the time or period in which the experiences took place (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Retelling meaningful moments could lead to how their present and future could be affected by their past experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Haydon & van der Riet, 2017). *Sociality* seeks to understand the cultural aspects that shape individuals' views of this experience (Haydon & van der Riet, 2017). In addition, it delves into the ways the person themselves impacted how they moved through that

experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Researchers also consider *spatiality*, or the impact of environmental factors during an individual's experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Brockmier and Harré (1997) argue that the narratives provided by individuals are based on the context of the setting, perspectives, and actions they engaged in during that specific point in time. The stories provided insight into the participants' worldview at a particular moment (Brockmier & Harré, 1997). Reconstructing an event (or internalizing an experience, analyzing, engaging in sense-making, and selecting words to verbalize its meaning concerning cultural norms) provided robust data (Rabelo, 2022). Reconstruction gives a snapshot of an individual's perspective and physical world at the time of the experience (Brockmier & Harré, 1997). Participants reliving these experiences through narration allowed them to unpack significant prior moments in a space co-created by the researcher and interviewee. Rabelo (2022) noted: "The interviewee is this narrator who, through the "act of telling," seeks the explanations he often wished to have or discovered later" (p. 122). Through narrative inquiry, I assisted participants with articulating their experiences in a way that may not have been revealed through a different methodology.

Methodological Fit of Narrative Inquiry for Research with Students of Color

Research has identified that narrative inquiry is a valid and meaningful way of exploring the experiences of people of color. As individuals are asked to narrate their past, people of color are provided opportunities to be heard and affirmed by the researcher (Gudmundsdóttir, 2001). Narration empowers marginalized identities by providing a venue to escape typical barriers and colorblindness they encounter and acknowledging their unique experiences (Gudmundsdóttir, 2001). Due to White systems of power and dominance of cultural impact, it is difficult to completely untangle White narratives from marginalized communities' stories (Santa-Ramirez et

al., 2022). Santa-Ramirez et al. (2022) found conducting research at a university that White world-views were: “interwoven into participants’ messy, particular, and multiple narrations” (Santa-Ramirez et al., 2022, p. 115). It’s essential to maintain the integrity of the participant’s perspective and specific words selected while also acknowledging the impact White cultural ideals have on society. By acknowledging upfront in the abstract and reiterating in the discussion of any research, the context of an environment (e.g., PWI or highly populated White suburban area) serves as the foreground when seeking to understand circumstances in which people of color navigate. Connelly et al. (2003) argued that narrative inquiry is a beneficial way of examining participants’ stories from a vast array of cultural backgrounds, perspectives, and cultural practices throughout their lives.

Since the narrative inquiry is about capturing how individuals live their lives, it proved to be a useful methodology to employ with those from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds (Connelly et al., 2003). For centuries, the Black community has used stories to communicate important lessons intergenerationally (Bell, 1987, 1992, 1996; Davis, 2021). Storytelling has allowed for an acknowledgment of the trauma, a way to grapple with the impact, and permission to move forward with lessons learned in the Latinx community (Delgado, 1995a, 1995b; Olivas, 1990; Yosso, 2006). It would behoove researchers to utilize a narrative approach with people of color because stories serve as the bedrock of their communities. Storytelling in communities of color helps to unpack trauma and reframe events in ways that build resilience (Crawford, 2014; Fitzgerald et al., 2021).

Rodriguez (2010) noted three main points in using a narrative approach with students of color: meaningful relationships, disruption of racial discrimination, and creation of intentional spaces. (1) Meaningful relationships refer to the researcher and participant bond during the

study; it involves the researcher coming from a place of empathy and understanding (Rodriguez, 2010). (2) Disruption of racial discrimination—validating the student's experience, naming racist language or actions, and empowering the individual by affirming their racial/ethnic identity (Rodriguez, 2010). The researcher should also consider the student's environment, e.g., PWI, to understand the student's potential impact (Rodriguez, 2010). (3) Creating intentional spaces refers to the researcher and student's ability to co-create a space to discuss unique experiences they encounter within oppressive systems (Rodriguez, 2010). Narrative inquiry can serve students of color by providing a source of support, affirmation, and professional bonds (Rodriguez, 2010).

Research with this population, however, should not be seen as purely a scientific endeavor. When working with marginalized populations, researchers should seek to invest in the individual(s) rather than simply extracting their stories and abruptly ending ties (Seidman, 2006). Investment during interviews can come in affirming body language, practicing active listening, etc. Placing time on creating a psychologically safe space, empathizing, and seeking to understand perspectives is why quantity is not the aim of narrative research (Clandinin & Caine, 2013; Kim, 2016). The quality of the interaction is paramount when attempting to elicit rich responses that may produce valuable insights into the participants' world.

Methods

Sample Size & Strategy

A lack of equity exists within interviewing as a research practice (Seidman, 2013). Qualitative research has historically based its findings on White individuals or dominant cultures and has not included a range of marginalized identities (Draucker et al., 2014; Hammack, 2008). To have diversity within the sample, I focused on male participants representing various socio-economic backgrounds, college preparedness, and experiences from different institutional

types. The sample size for this study was 20 collegiate males of color. A purposive sampling method is defined as the: “intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon” (Robinson, 2014, p. 227). Three considerations apply when engaging in purposive sampling: (a) participant type, (b) sampling strategy, and (c) sample size (Creswell, 2013). The researcher focuses on participant type when employing narrative because a link exists between the question and the participant (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). The researcher seeks the participants’ narrative based on their unique cultural, racial, and ethnic heritage that can provide insight into the area of study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

Attempting to get diversity within the sample can make it challenging to recruit participants that meet the characteristics of the type of research I conducted. Mixing different sampling methods helped achieve a diverse set of participants within the larger Black and Latinx groups. Valerio et al. (2016) discuss mixing sampling methods to address the logistical barriers surrounding low participation. They continue to state these populations are inherently challenging to recruit. I used a mix of purposive and snowball sampling, supplemented with convenience sampling. Snowball sampling worked to tap into different networks so individuals may connect the researcher to those affiliated with the target population (Etikan et al., 2017). And convenience sampling is described as recruiting individuals identified as “easily accessible” to the researcher (Sedgwick, 2013, p. 1).

Procedures for Recruitment and Selection

Participant Selection Criteria

To ensure diversity within the sample for individual interviews, I focused on male participants representing varied socio-economic backgrounds, college preparedness, and experiences from different institutional types. The sample size for this study was 20 collegiate males of color. A purposive sampling method is defined as the: “intentional selection of

informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon" (Robinson, 2014, p. 1). Attempting to get diversity within the sample can make it challenging to recruit participants that meet the characteristics of the population I studied.

Valerio et al. (2016) speak to the use of mixing sampling methods; they describe this approach to address the logistical barriers surrounding low participation. They state that these populations need to have diversity within the sample. The institutional background of the participants were males of Black and Latinx descent that attended a PWI, HBCU, or HSI. There was a mix of public and private institutions. The socio-economic backgrounds of participants were varied, and the sampling included first-generation college students. Participants were comprised of those who identify as the following:

- male students who are either Black or Latinx, traditional-aged college students who ranged from 18–24 in age at the time of attendance;
- a graduate (2017–2022) of a four-year undergraduate program in the U.S.;
- held a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above.

I contacted the Deans of Student Affairs, Directors of Black and Latinx student groups, and Residence Life professionals from different institutional types when I sought out potential participants. I contacted PWIs, HBCUs, and public and private institutions to recruit participants by sending follow-up emails and phone calls. I got most of the participants through individuals within my professional networks who knew of students matching the criteria. Some participants came from referrals by some of the males I had recently interviewed. Once I attained potential participants to interview for individual interviews, I performed the following:

- Set up a brief phone call where I went over the nature of the study, emailed them a copy of the informed consent to sign, and reviewed the informed consent with them over the

phone to see if they had any questions. I also expressly pointed out that the session will be video recorded and asked for verbal permission in addition to their written consent.

- Manually entered and also received responses via a google form questionnaire that requested basic identifying and demographic information such as: name, age, race or ethnicity, year in college or date of graduation, cumulative Grade Point Average, clubs, organizations, or internships they in which they participated, name of institution, institution type (private, public, PWI, HBCU, etc.), and the state and city where their former institution was geographically located.
- Participants were told that pseudonyms would be used in the published dissertation to protect their identities and asked to select pseudonyms.
- Provided the participant(s) with a date, time, and link to attend the individual Zoom interview.
- Reached out via email to any participants under consideration who did not match the criteria and thanked them for their interest.

Additional Participant Considerations

Since the populations I selected for my research come from historically marginalized backgrounds, I found it necessary to find individuals who were comfortable discussing complex topics candidly. I created an additional list of considerations that I asked for when setting up participants' interview dates and times. I asked if Black and Latinx male participants were:

1. Willing to be transparent about any racial or other forms of discrimination faced while setting out to achieve their academic goals;
2. Able to reveal the motivational factors that aided in their academic achievement;
3. Were engaged in effective academic strategies;

4. Were academically successful at 3.0 and above;
5. Had the ability to discuss their lived experiences regarding the physical and emotional energy exerted while attempting to reach academic success;
6. Could agree to reflect on their collegiate experience and express the impact it had on them.

I included those items to reduce the chance of selecting a participant who did not want to speak in-depth about their experiences in college due to potential racial trauma. Using the seven items served as a reminder for me to approach these conversations with care and empathy. Finally, it ensured that the study was ready for dynamic discussions that may yield powerful insights.

Data Collection

Data collection was performed through 20 individual interviews. The following outlines the procedures and rationales I utilized for conducting individual interviews:

Main Question:

- What are the experiences that make Black and Latinx students academically successful?

Additional Questions Asked (When Participants Needed Additional Prompting):

1. Can you talk about how your parents influenced your path to college? (Please provide specific examples of impactful discussions, parental expectations, etc.).
2. What drives (or drove) you to be engaged in class and work on assignments?
3. When academic challenges arose, what steps did you take to address them? (e.g., formulating a plan, reviewing people or resources in your head to get help, etc.)
4. Can you tell me if you felt you had anyone that played a significant role in your academic success (e.g., friends, family, faculty, staff, etc.)?

5. Is there anything else about your experience you have not shared that you believe would be important for me?

I limited the number of questions to allow time for detailed responses. Some participants engaged in more active discussion without much prompting than others. For those that required more prompting, I asked follow-up questions to gain more information about the experiences that made them academically successful. For clarity, I paraphrased most of their statements. Toward the end, I summarized my main takeaways by incorporating significant pieces of their story while acknowledging them for their academic excellence.

Use of Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews are when the researcher has no assumptions entering the interview and holds no answers to the research question (Minichiello et al., 1990). However, "the term is used interchangeably with the terms informal conversational interview, in-depth interview, non-standardized interview, and ethnographic interview" (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 1). The unstructured interview technique was implemented to examine the participants' experiences and utilized to limit bias (Punch, 1998). Punch (1998) argued that an interviewer's ability to ask salient questions would be hampered by entering the interview with assumptions. For Black and Latinx male students, there is a large body of research on the barriers they confront. However, using an unstructured format created new and unexpected information that might not otherwise be revealed.

An unstructured technique allowed me to follow up with questions pertinent to the conversation instead of solely relying on predetermined questions (Patton, 2002). Still, I did have a list of pre-constructed questions as a way of prompting reminders to hit essential points (Briggs, 2000; McCann & Clark, 2005; Minichiello et al., 1990). The technique allowed for a

more authentic conversation that is synergistic between the researcher and participant (Patton, 2002). However, Patton (2002) contends that unstructured is not synonymous with unpreparedness. A researcher must also enter the interview with the knowledge and understanding of the population and existing literature, so I reviewed my literature review prior to the interviews (Patton, 2002). Employing an informal technique requires researchers to remember and refer back to the main topics of discussion to ensure the interview does not delve into unrelated areas (Fife, 2005). Deciding to use a pre-constructed list of questions or a memory aid did not drive the conversation (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The memory aid gave me the essence of question types that may elicit robust responses (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The goal was to be prepared yet flexible enough to artfully switch up topic order and rephrase questions germane to that particular participant interaction (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

Individual Interviews

Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that interviewing illuminates a researcher's understanding of participants' storied lives. They noted it conveys the emotion, interpretations, and ultimate meaning they ascribed to specific experiences. I conducted 20 individual interviews (10 Black and 10 Latinx males). Different views exist amongst researchers about the optimal number of participants in a narrative study. Guest et al. (2006) suggest that saturation is achieved when no significant discoveries add to the researchers' understanding of the topic, while Boddy (2016) indicates that 12 interviews will usually suffice. Yet, I wanted to ensure that I could increase the demographic diversity, but diversity within each participant's rich narrative is why I elected to conduct 20 individual interviews.

During the individual interviews, I explored what the participants' thoughts attributed to their academic success in college. I selected video versus audio recording because I wanted to

note items such as overall appearance and body language. Data from the interviews were kept in a password-protected file on Dropbox. Transcripts from the individual interviews were performed through a third-party service called Otter AI (an auto-generated transcript service that transcribes the interview while it was being recorded). I rewatched each interview to rectify errors (e.g., Otter AI misunderstanding a word a participant said), redact each transcript's sensitive aspects, and identify participant information. After reviewing all transcripts collectively to tease out commonalities, I reviewed the Black and Latinx male transcripts separately to identify divergences in their narratives. I checked the transcripts several times, along with the video recording, to ensure accuracy.

Field Notes

During the individual interviews, I utilized field notes. Field notes provided additional information by noting my interview observations (Creswell, 2013). Notes I took assisted with my research observations—participants' body language, any tension or hyper-engagement in a particular topic, and their overall tone (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). I frequently referred back to field notes to recapture the essence of the time with each participant, and I believe it provided greater depth in my analysis and reporting (Creswell, 2013; Lofland et al., 2005; Mulhall, 2003; Patton, 2002).

Reflexive Thematic Data Analysis

The thematic analysis was "a way of examining participant's experiences, thoughts, or behaviors across a data set" (Kiger & Varpio, 2020, p. 1). Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), which falls under the umbrella of thematic analysis, pushes researchers to capture themes in responses by constructing original codes (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Researchers select RTA because the belief themes are constructed versus discovered within the data (Braun & Clarke,

2019). The main distinction is that the researcher is driving the meaning versus finding meaning within the interview transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Interpretation in analyzing data is an intensive process that demands an innovative approach to how the data are interconnected (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Ratcliffe (1983) argues: "data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter or translator… One cannot observe or measure a phenomenon/event without changing it, even in physics where reality is no longer considered to be single-faceted" (p. 150). The stories participants toldregarding moments in history that occurred and the emphasis they gave them are nuances that were identified and interpreted in my analysis.

Through RTA, I have unpacked the narratives provided during each interview. The main distinction between RTA and other approaches is that RTA believes there is no right way to conduct the coding process. The process is outlined further in the coding section. The researcher drives the analysis through their interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Therefore, there is no need for another researcher to check for accuracy since the process is based on the main researcher's perspective, creativity, and construction of codes and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I still elected to incorporate several other individuals to help expand my perspective on the data from the interviews. I wanted to be mindful of any blind spots or where implicit bias may have come into play. Understanding that everyone has biases that limit their ability to fully see a situation for what it is, I chose to have 12 different researchers (providing varying degrees of support) to help me analyze the data from multiple angles. The researchers, their role in the study, and their contributions are listed on the next page.

Table 3.1

Code Reviewer and Data Analysts Contributions

Name	Title	Profession	Identifying Gender	Racial/Ethnic Background	Contribution
Dr. David Lawrence	Code Reviewer	K-12 Educator	Male	African American	• Reviewed eight transcripts • Provided thoughts on specific aspects of participant's narratives • Gave insight into the main researcher's guiding principles
Stephanie Fox	Data Analyst	Mental Health Therapist	Female	White	• Assisted with renaming main themes • Provided thoughts on guiding principles
Brad Hapuret	Data Analyst	Former Marine/ Current Student	Male	White	• Reviewed one participant's profile • Received excerpts from select participant interviews • Provided analysis on overarching themes and sub-themes
Isaiah Jackson	Data Analyst	Mental Health Therapist in Training	Male	African American	• Reviewed three participant profiles • Received excerpts from select participant interview • Provided analysis on overarching themes and sub-themes • Assisted with the renaming of main themes
Eron Jenkins	Data Analyst	K-12 Educator	Male	White	• Reviewed one participant's profile • Reviewed specific participant excerpts

Name	Title	Profession	Identifying Gender	Racial/Ethnic Background	Contribution
					• Provided extensive background in education in the South
Malik Johnson	Data Analyst	Higher Education Administrator	Male	African American	• Reviewed one participant's profile • Provided thoughts on challenges within the LGBTQIA+ Community for Black males • Gave insights on family dynamics for Black males and Latinx males
Iliya Ghotbi	Data Analyst	Technical Administrator	Male	N/A	• Provided with excerpts from select interview transcripts • Received information on overarching themes • Assisted with a deeper analysis concerning race and discrimination
Gerald Jones	Data Analyst	Lawyer	Male	African American	• Provided with overarching themes • Assisted with giving insights concerning the challenges within the educational system for Black males
Martin Lacayo	Data Analyst	Higher Education Administrator	Male	Afro-Latinx	• Provided with three profiles • Given specific excerpts from participant interviews • Gave insight into how institutional barriers can affect Black and Latinx

Name	Title	Profession	Identifying Gender	Racial/Ethnic Background	Contribution
					male education in collegiate environments
Alex Pena	Data Analyst	Educator	Male	Latinx	• Provided with overarching themes • Given participant excerpts from interviews • Gave an in-depth analysis of the challenges Latinx males encounter (e.g., financial literacy)
Dr. Virginia Reiner	Data Analyst	Former Higher Education Educator/ Current Non-Profit Administrator	Female	White	• Provided with two profiles • Given specific excerpts from participant interviews • Gave in-depth insights into academic achievement for both populations with examples from her extensive experience within higher education
Ryan Rodriguez	Data Analyst	Mental Health Therapist	Male	Latinx	• Provided with one specific profile • Discussed the challenges affecting LGBTQIA+ students on campus.
Oscar Romano	Data Analyst	Educational Consultant	Male	Latinx	• Overarching Themes and reviewing guiding principles

The main code reviewer and I engaged in extensive conversations about the development of themes over time. My rationale for utilizing the data analysts at varying degrees of

engagement with the data was based on their areas of expertise. For example, issues surrounding racial trauma were extensively discussed with Martin and Isaiah. As for examining challenges with education in the Southern Region of the U.S., I utilized the expertise of Eron to provide his knowledge of the various dynamics at play that acts as barriers for Black students in the South. For one final example, I drew upon the experience of Malik and Ryan, who self-identify as gay males, to discuss Trey Douglas' experience with discrimination for his gay identity at his college institution. All of the contributors allowed me to think of a dimension of the participants' experience that I perhaps had only briefly considered. In Chapters IV and V, specific quotes or general thoughts from the contributors are interwoven into my discussion of the findings.

Researcher's Philosophical Perspective

Using an RTA approach, the researcher's philosophical perspectives are paramount to navigating and grounding the data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). My research paradigm is critical/transformative. I found a critical paradigm that aligns with my beliefs since it addresses the deleterious effects of policies that spawn inequality and oppressive systems (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). A critical paradigm is also known as transformative since it focuses on identifying, strategizing, and implementing solutions to social justice issues (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). My ontological perspective is rooted in historical realism. I found historical realism appropriate in my study of Black and Latinx male students due to its perspective that "reality has been shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110).

Codes & Themes

Creating codes and themes within RTA focuses more on the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the data (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016). Codes in RTA are meant for the

initial stages of analysis to identify first impressions, specific aspects of the topic/issues raised, and potential themes (Charmaz, 2006). The main distinction between codes and themes is that themes are multifaceted, thoroughly analyzing numerous aspects of a topic (Charmaz, 2006). Themes require a sense of complexity and provide the researcher with a wealth of insight that can be presented as a core theme (Chazman, 2006).

Code Checking within Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Coding in RTA is different from other forms of thematic analysis that seek the aid of others to check for accuracy; it is more about the relationship between the researcher's thoughts and the data collected (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016). If the lead researcher chooses, adding other researchers to the RTA coding process is not meant to check for reliability (Byrne, 2021). However, adding researchers during the coding process was intended to and did enhance my understanding of the data (Byrne, 2021). Researchers do not hunt for themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Instead, Braun and Clarke (2020) state: "The analytic process involves immersion in the data, reading, reflecting, questioning, imagining, wondering, writing, retreating, returning" (p. 5).

Six-Step Process for Coding Participant Responses

I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2020) six-step coding process. The following will provide an in-depth description along with a rationale for how I performed my analysis:

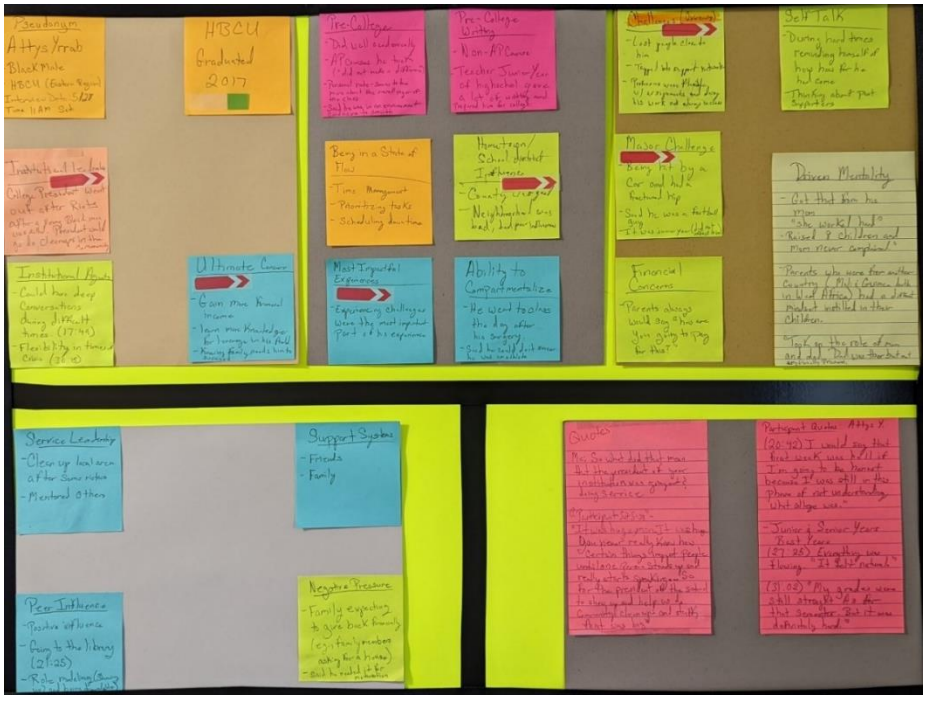
Step 1: Familiarization with the Data–Listening, rewatching recordings, and reviewing the transcript were essential to creating a depth of understanding of the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2020; Byrne, 2021). First, I rewatched the recorded Zoom session without taking notes to get a baseline understanding of the discussion and salient points raised (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2020; Byrne, 2021). Second, I rewatched and listened with a different ear to document anything I

identified in the recordings in addition to my general thoughts and takeaways within the margins via comments on a word document (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2020; Byrne, 2021). The second watch also included observing non-verbal cues, pauses, the flow of voice, etc. Rewatching and actively listening to the recordings of interviews allowed me to be deliberate in my analysis.

The third time, I did a listen only with headphones and began to write notes on Post-it notes and put them on a board on my wall and notebook. This process spoke to me as both a visual and kinesthetic learner. I would frequently pause the recording and check the time stamp. I sometimes included the timestamp by a particular quote or note I wanted to refer back to if I found it essential. These included emphasizing certain words, revisiting or thoroughly discussing one specific moment, and so forth. Third, I rewatched the recording a final time to gain insight. Figure 3.1 illustrates how I engaged with the data and began to bridge into *Step 2: Code Creation.*

Figure 3.1

Researcher's Engagement with the Data



Step 2: Creation of Initial Codes–concise descriptions of salient pieces of data that have the potential to service larger themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2020; Byrne, 2021). A deductive approach enabled me to engage with the data by personally identifying meaningful text, through the lens of theory, in the transcripts and drove the construction of my themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Using a predominantly deductive approach versus an inductive approach allowed me to keep in mind findings from past research in my analysis. Within the transcript, I included filler words such as: "umms, ahs, and you know" to analyze their importance and supply a deeper analysis.

However, Braun and Clarke (2013) state that one cannot engage in a purely inductive or deductive approach. They note the blurred lines between the approaches and the need to, at times, utilize one or the other; therefore, I complemented deductive philosophical orientation with an inductive approach. Still, the researchers convey the importance of identifying the dominant selected approach to explain the rationale behind various decisions during the analysis phase. For coding my research and identifying potential themes, I utilized a word document and put notes in the margins alongside Post-It notes to further tease out codes and possible themes.

I utilized one main code reviewer to help increase my understanding of the data collected. I then had the help of twelve additional individuals who served as one main code reviewer, and the rest served as Data Analysts. The main code reviewer, Dr. David Lawrence, reviewed seven of my transcripts which included eight transcripts (5 Latinx and 3 Black participants). The Data Analysts assisted during the next step—*Step 3: Constructing Themes*. I will elaborate on their role further in the next step. Braun et al. (2019) noted that codes could be semantic or latent. There is a distinction between the two—semantic refers to "explicit meaning, close to participant language" (Braun et al., 2019, p. 853). Then the term latent chooses to "focus on a deeper, more

implicit or conceptual level of meaning" (Braun et al., 2019, p. 853). During my analysis, I constructed both semantic and implicit codes that represented the actual statements of participants while also providing a deeper exploration of the data.

Step 3: Constructing Themes–all codes were reviewed, and I began to take a macro-level perspective on the following: how they fit together parallels and other connections (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2020). As I spoke with the different data analysts and my methodologist, I continued fine-tuning the themes. Some earlier themes were absorbed into new main themes (becoming sub-themes). I also became more intentional about having the themes flow in a specific order. I wanted the main themes to go from examining the participants' sense of self to exploring the external factors that influenced their academic outcomes.

Table 3.2

Main Theme Iterations

Iteration 1	Iteration 2	Iteration 3	Iteration 4	Iteration 5	Iteration 6
Visionary and Committed Action	Envisioning Success	Cultural Identities and their Impact on Collegiate Experiences	Salient Identities and the Implications for the Self and Others	Salient Identities and the Implications for the Self and Others	Salient Identities and the Implications for the Self and Others
Academic Rigor	Academic Rigor	Catalysts for Academic Success	Ineffable Identity -Based Experiences	Ineffable Identity-Based Experience	Navigating the Master Narrative
Pre-College Experiences	Pre-College Experiences	Enacting a Vision	Catalysts for Academic Success	Catalysts for Academic Success	Catalysts for Academic Success
Social Support Systems	Social Support Systems	Formative Experiences	Significant Interpersonal Interactions	Significant Interpersonal Interactions	Significant Interpersonal Interactions
Finances	Financial Challenges	Mastering the Art of Becoming	Formative Educational & Developmental Moments	Critical Junctures	Critical Junctures and Formative Moments
Parental Involvement and Adult Figures	Parental Influence		Critical Junctures		
	Driven Mentality Racial Stereotyping				

Step 4: Review of Themes–potential themes identified must serve the original research question(s) (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2020). Any themes that do not align with the research question(s) or make sense in a different category were addressed at this stage (Braun & Clarke,

2012, 2020). I manually reviewed excerpts from participant responses. Step four was the first checkpoint that identified themes that do not fit or need to be placed elsewhere.

Step 5: Clearly Define Themes–The recursivity of this step was to ensure nothing was missed, identify new connections, and re-tool specific themes that may not illustrate the point a researcher wants to convey (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2020). This step can act as a quality control measure to ensure that the overall narrative story constructed makes sense for the research questions asked. For example, step five asks questions such as: (a) Is this a code or a theme? (b) Is there anything meaningful or significant here? (c) Are there multiple data points supporting the proposed larger theme? (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Finally, I provided the themes with names and definitions to clearly articulate their purpose to the reader (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2020).

I did not seek to label something that simply stopped at the participants' descriptions of events. I continued to hold onto my ontological perspective, rooted in historical realism, and combined with the reflexive nature of my analysis. There were multiple layers that I needed to sift through. With the aid of my main code reviewer, additional data analysts, and my methodologist, I grappled with the complexities of each participant's narratives. I would frequently utilize their support to deconstruct the meaning of specific participant excerpts. The naming for each theme and sub-theme, from the initial iteration through the final iteration, came down to the following:

1. Formulating new thoughts from rewatching the interviews and anything I ensured to highlight in my field notes during the live Zoom interview;
2. Engaging in several discussions with my code reviewer to expand my awareness;
3. Presenting specific profiles and the specific iteration of the overarching themes and sub-themes I had then. For example, presenting iteration 3 (Note: for both the code

reviewer and data analysts, I would share my knowledge from the existing body of literature and my participant observations from any particular excerpts or examples stemming from participant interviews. Through sharing my knowledge, the code reviewer and data analysts were provided a more comprehensive understanding of the way specific words or phrases were stated and emphasized by the participants);

4. Next, I presented the latest iteration to my methodologist, and we worked on finding a word that would best convey to the reader the intricacies and significance of the theme.

Step 6: The Final Report–the final written report is a living or fluid document written during all six stages of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The report evolved throughout the entire study. The process required much thought, revision of codes and themes, and discoveries throughout (Braun & Clarke, 2012). I began typing the report as I analyzed the data and journaled my process of discovery during each step of the process (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The order of each theme in the final reporting was key since specific themes will influence others (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2020; Byrne, 2021). How I presented the themes has been in service of the larger narrative that I composed to discuss how participants employed successful academic strategies (Byrne, 2021). Since RTA leans into researcher interpretation, I did not merely describe or theorize; however, instead communicated my understanding of how each theme drives the success of Black and Latinx male students (Byrne, 2021; Terry et al., 2017).

Issues of Trustworthiness

I have chosen to address issues of trustworthiness in my study by focusing on two tools–participants' review of the meanings I constructed and triangulation. After individual interviews, I had participants perform the review. Although member checking has traditionally been

recommended to allow participants to review the transcripts to ensure their responses were accurately recorded (Birt et al., 2016), it is of limited use if the transcript was produced correctly. When participants reviewed the meaning I constructed from their interviews, it allowed them to give feedback on whether I correctly understood what they conveyed.

Through investigator triangulation, after conducting individual interviews, I created a way to strengthen the trustworthiness of the data. Collecting "multiple sources of data" aided me in getting enough information to compare, contrast, and seek validation of the narratives (Denzin, 1978; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 244). This format allowed me to expand my awareness and get varying perspectives on the participant data. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that using multiple sources to identify commonalities in the data–triangulation–assists the researcher and the audience understand themes consistent across various sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Triangulation assisted in validating the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Triangulation is meant to "Ensure that the information we derive from research data accurately reflects the truth about phenomena under investigation, different research methods are used" (Moon, 2019, p. 103). Discrepancies that arose among the participants of the individual interviews are within my findings and discussion sections. Discrepancies in students citing vastly different reasons as to how the same phenomena of achievement occur have led me to some conclusions. Conclusions I drew upon were: (a) a difference in colligate environment, (b) differences due to age, (c) varying life perspectives, and (d) differences in their graduation year, for example, students who graduated pre-COVID-19 pandemic versus students who graduated during the pandemic. The different narratives I found in conducting this research will hopefully further illuminate researchers' understanding of achievement, a complex and multilayered topic within higher education (Moon, 2019).

Ethical Considerations

Regarding ethical considerations, aside from the locking mentioned above of documents and using pseudonyms for participants' names, I made sure to redact any other pieces of identifying information from the final report. My population was composed of adult males, so there were no additional considerations for age. For example, extra precautions would have been needed if I had researched the child or adolescent populations. Other ethical considerations regarding racial trauma or other forms of discrimination were addressed. Asking questions regarding their experiences opened up the possibility for participants to be triggered. Since I worked with Black and Latinx male students, I was sensitive to racial, ethnic, and cultural issues. Although I still asked questions about their academic success strategies, their race, and ethnicity are inextricably linked to how they navigated their collegiate experiences. I took extra precautions by listing 24/7 national crisis numbers in participants' informed consent forms. Then I reiterated the crisis resources during the opening script of each participant interview.

In an attempt to address various racial, ethnic, and cultural pieces, I considered the interview environment a counter space to share their experiences. Counter spaces are co-constructed by the researcher and participant to provide an empathic and safe environment to share stories that impact marginalized populations (Rodriguez, 2010). In higher education, Latinx students have not been given the platform to share their experiences (Pizarro, 1998). In addition to other marginalized identities, Latinx students can experience negative emotions when prompted to answer questions regarding academic experiences (Fine & Weis, 1996; Fine et al., 2000). Therefore, I verbally stated and modeled during the interviews with participants that their experiences are welcome, there is no judgment, and they have power and autonomy. For example, there were moments participants shared stories of mental health challenges, and I

paused, thanked them for their vulnerability, and reminded them we could take a break, they could pass on answering the question, or both. To fully utilize the interview as a counter space, I acknowledged them for their personal and academic achievements at the end of the interview. I restated each participant's challenges and success and how their acute awareness of their strengths and openness to learning to attain their goals was inspiring.

Summary

I used all the methods above to produce a study that provides a meaningful look into what makes Black and Latinx male college students successful. I also explored what distinguishing factors must be considered when supporting each group. I believe that capturing their narratives through an anti-deficit lens continued to move the research in a positive and culturally diverse direction. Using RTA allowed me to find connections among the narratives and produce new findings that may translate to effective recommendations. When analyzing the transcripts and sifting through initial codes, I identified commonalities and distinctions between the two groups. Honing in on key concepts, such as cultural differences in motivational factors and family dynamics, provided more insights that are discussed in Chapters IV and V. By conducting individual interviews, I believe I have collected the necessary data to present these populations' unique experiences to the scholarly community.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Chapter IV will provide the findings from this research. The various sections in this chapter will be structured as follows:

- Review of Core Study Components
    - Purpose of the Study
    - Main Question and Sub-Question
    - Methodological Approach
    - Data Analysis Method
- Overview of Participants' Personal and Institutional Demographics
- Research Findings
    - Presentation of Overarching Themes and Sub-Themes
    - Commonalities Amongst Participants and Exploration of Themes
    - Points of Distinction Amongst Participants
        - Findings for Black Male Participants
        - Findings for Latinx Male Participants
- Summary of Findings

Review of Core Study Components

Before revealing the findings, I would like to review the following core components of the study to frame the results: the main research question, methodological approach, and purpose.

Core Study Components

- **Purpose of the Study:** To capture Black and Latinx male college graduates' narratives to explore potential avenues of supporting both populations. Then, after understanding the

commonalities, differences, and distinct aspects of each group's culture, I utilized the data to create recommendations for a culturally responsive approach to academically supporting each group, which will be discussed in Chapter V.

- **Main Research Question:** What are the experiences that make Black and Latinx students academically successful?
    - **Sub-Question:** What are the commonalities and differences amongst each population?
- **Methodological Approach:** Narrative Inquiry was the methodology employed to conduct qualitative interviews. The selected methodology allowed me to understand the complex identities of each participant and the unique aspects of their stories.
- **Data Analysis Method:** Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) involves constructing themes instead of letting themes "emerge from the data" and acknowledges that the researcher draws from their experiences and understanding of the literature to analyze and further elicit insight from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2020). The analysis also involved my observations of the participants—reviewing the interview recording for vocal tone, general body language, facial expression, overall emotional state, pauses, and moments of emphasis. I included these observations to provide a more robust analysis to help the reader understand the participants and their narratives. During my analysis, I also employed the use of field notes during the interviews, which captured my impressions and observations that I frequently utilized to recapture my initial thoughts.
    - **Code Reviewer and Data Analysts:** Braun and Clarke (2020) find that having multiple individuals to help expand awareness of the data can assist in providing a more thorough analysis. During this process, there was one primary Code

Reviewer (provided with several transcripts and codes I constructed) and seven Data Analysts (they were supplied themes and select excerpts from various participant interviews). The Code Reviewer and Analysts helped iterate the themes and provided overall thoughts that will be discussed further in Chapter V.

Overview of Participants' Personal and Institutional Demographics

The following is a brief review of the information provided in Chapter III:

- **The Number of Research Participants:**
  - 10 Black male college graduates
  - 10 Latinx male college graduates
  - 20 participants total
- **Graduation Information of Participants:**
  - All male participants were already graduates with conferred bachelor's degrees at the time of their interviews.
  - The participants' graduation years spanned from 2017 to 2022. Exact graduation years are intentionally not included to protect participants' confidentiality.
- **Regional Differences:** participants were from regions all over the United States. Most participants were from the Northeastern Region.

Regarding the size of institutions, the labels of: *small, medium, large,* and *huge* are from the Carnegie Classification of Colleges and Universities. The following are classifications based on total student enrollment:

1. **Small:** 5,000 or less
2. **Medium:** maximum of 15,000
3. **Large:** maximum of 30,000

4. **Huge:** exceeding 30,000

Institutional sizes can be found under the heading *Institutional Type* in the table on the next page (Carnegie Classifications | Basic Classification, n.d.).

Overview of Participants' Personal and Institutional Demographics

The subsequent sections provide participants' data in alphabetical order, by their last name, according to the Racial or Ethnic group (Black or Latinx) in which they identify.

Table 4.1

Black Male Participants' Personal and Institutional Demographics

Pseudonym	Current Age Range	Socioeconomic Status	First Generation Student? (Yes or No)	Institution Type*	Institution Region	Cumulative GPA
Eldrick Bryant	22–25	Middle Income	No	PWI–Small Private	Northeastern	3.2
Nathaniel Cooper	21–23	Low Income	Yes	HSI–Small Private (Christian)	Northeastern	3.4
Leroy Casanova	24–27	Middle Income	No	HBCU–Medium Public	Mid-Atlantic	3.0
Trey Douglas	24–27	Low Income	No	HBCU–Small Private	Southern	3.28
Abdul Hassan	23–25	Middle Income	No	PWI–Small Private	Southern	3.3
Chris Jackson	24–27	Middle Income	Yes	PWI–Small Private	Northeastern	3.7
Myers Lee	26–28	Middle Income	No	PWI–Medium Public	Northeastern	3.1
Clark Wayne	21–23	Upper-Middle Income	No	PWI–Large Public	Midwestern	3.4
Sully Woods	21–23	Middle Income	No	PWI–Small Private	Northeastern	3.22
Attys Yrrab	26–28	Low Income	Yes	HBCU–Large Public	Mid-Atlantic	3.4

Table 2.2

Latinx Male Participants' Personal and Institutional Demographics

Pseudonym	Current Age Range	Socioeconomic Status	First Generation Student? (Yes or No)	Institution Type*	Institution Region	Cumulative GPA
Mike Brown	22–25	N/A	No	HSI–Small Private (Christian)	Northeastern	3.2
Lewis Fournier	26–28	Low Income	No	PWI–Large Public	Northeastern	3.3
Steve Hamlet	22–25	Low Income	Yes	PWI–Large Public	Southern	3.3
Mike Lowrey	27–29	Low Income	Yes	PWI–Large Public	Northeastern	3.2
Martin Quinn	25–27	Middle Income	Yes	PWI–Large Public	Northeastern	3.15
Alex Ortiz	21–23	Middle Income	Yes	PWI–Small Private	Northeastern	3.15
Pedro Rivera	23–25	Middle Income	Yes	PWI–Small (Catholic) Private	Northeastern	3.6
Joe Rodriguez	23–25	Low Income	Yes	PWI–Small Private	Southern	3.0
Andrew Smith	25–27	Low Income	Yes	PWI–Medium Public	Northeastern	3.2
Daniel Vazquez	22–24	Low Income	Yes	PWI–Large Public	Northeastern	3.48

Table 4.3

Average of Participant GPAs

Average GPA of Black Participants:	3.3
Average GPA of Latinx Participants:	3.258
Average GPA of All Participants:	3.279

Although I found quantifying select pieces of data appropriate to streamline the presentation of specific data for both populations, I will not continue to quantify other parts of the data (for example, counting the number of times a participant said a specific phrase). Braun and Clarke (2022) have emphasized the importance of not providing "simple counts" (p. 14). They argue that participants are unique in their perception of past events. Thus, although using a word can provide some insights into commonalities, researchers must not "assume" participants are communicating the same thing.

Participant Profiles and Researcher Observations

This section provides profiles for each participant within the study. I have separated the profiles based on their respective populations (Black and Latinx) and in alphabetical order based on their last name (selected pseudonym). The profiles will reiterate and include new pieces of information such as: (a) race and gender, (b) participant age range, (c) institution type and geographical location, (d) year of graduation, (e), if applicable, noting they are a first-generation student, (f) if applicable, noting they graduated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and (g) brief

thoughts, reflections, and insights on each interview. Aside from major grammatical issues that may confuse the reader, the participants' direct quotes in this chapter and Chapter V have not been altered. I intentionally decided not to alter participant quotes other (than what was previously stated) to preserve and reflect their authentic voices. Whenever an asterisk (*) is included within a participant quote, I have replaced a piece of personal identifying information with a general word to continue the flow of the excerpt. Ellipses (…) were used to ensure brevity while capturing the quote's essence. Please see the next page for *Table 4.4: Black Male Participant Profiles and Researcher Observations*.

Table 4.4

Black Male Participant Profiles and Researcher Observations

Black Male Participant Profiles and Researcher Observations		
Participants' Pseudonym	**Participants' Profile**	**Researcher Observations**
Eldrick Bryant	Eldrick Bryant is a Black male between 22–25 years old. He graduated from a small-private PWI within the Northeastern Region. He graduated in 2021 with a cumulative GPA of 3.2 and a degree in Sociology. This participant also graduated one year after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Eldrick had an academically rigorous pre-college experience at his private boarding high school. He had a firm discipline towards his academic work and exhibited an ambitious attitude.	Eldrick came off as more reserved during his interview. Yet, as the interview went on, he provided significant detail, such as: his pre-collegiate experiences of attending a private boarding school, being in an academic environment that encouraged excellence, and navigating a predominately White space aided him in college. At the end of the interview, when I acknowledged him for his accomplishments, focus, and drive in college and throughout his academic career, he smiled and exhibited a level of pride for the first time in the interview.
Nathaniel Cooper	Nathaniel Cooper is a Black male between the ages of 21 and 23. He graduated from a small-private (Christian) HSI within the Northeastern Region. Nathaniel identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2022 with a cumulative GPA of 3.4 and a computer science and mathematics degree. Also, the participant graduated towards the secondary stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. He is highly academically motivated and with a level of ambition to match. Nathaniel proved	Nathaniel had vibrant energy throughout the interview. He exuded an eagerness to discuss his accomplishments and future goals. At the same time, Nathaniel became serious at certain moments when talking about advocating for the help of others or reflecting on his leadership abilities. When discussing his low socioeconomic status, he went from smiling and discussing a course experience to a serious tone and facial expression. Through his facial expression and similar serious tone, Nathaniel also appeared to

	to be an inspired leader with an elevated desire to leave his mark regardless of the environment.	convey that he takes his education seriously. Yet, when stating that the bachelor's degree was "a small step in a larger goal" (which is to get his PhD), the subtle difference was there I interpreted as demonstrating confidence and an expression of commitment to his academic goals. Overall, I saw the traits of a charismatic leader with the developing skills to influence change.
Leroy Casanova	Leroy Casanova is a Black male in the age range of 24–27. He began his collegiate journey at a small-private PWI in the Northeastern Region. Leroy then transferred to an HBCU in the Mid-Atlantic Region. He graduated from the HBCU in 2020 with a cumulative GPA of 3.0. Leroy attained a degree in Sports Management with a concentration in Marketing. He graduated towards the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leroy is an authentic leader who is passionate about his marketing field and has been a mentor to others within the Black community.	Leroy was excited and communicated an admirable ability to connect with young students of color within his community. Throughout the interview, there was a sense of a positive and genuine attitude toward his experiences. He was tactful when discussing individuals with opposing views. His diplomatic communication conveyed a high emotional intelligence when Americans of every background struggled to discuss politically charged issues. Finally, he exhibited enthusiasm regarding his future aspirations of getting to the top of his field.
Trey Douglas	Trey Douglas is a Black male between the ages of 24 and 27. He graduated from a small private within the Southern Region. He graduated in 2019 with a cumulative GPA of 3.2 and a degree in Sociology. Trey is a well-accomplished scholar who demonstrates an abundance of curiosity for learning. During his undergraduate years, he held himself to a high standard and used his highly reflective nature to graduate with his bachelor's degree successfully.	Trey was fully transparent, and it was evident he had deeply reflected upon his experience before his interview. He came across as passionate when conveying his narrative. A salient point in his interview was the importance of building community. Trey laughed when discussing having to code-switch at his graduate experience, which was in stark contrast to his undergraduate experience, where he attended a prestigious HBCU. He also laughed when a professor of his at his graduate PWI used the term "White Women of Color" in his diversity course because the

		White woman professor wanted to highlight marginalized White women. That prior statement prompted me to apologize for the fact he went through the experience. Also, I tried to convey empathy for dealing with ignorance and minimization of the Black experience with his professor. Finally, he touched on internalized anti-blackness at his HBCU and how the conversation looked different within an all-Black space. He slowed his speech and emphasized that "Black spaces are not always safe spaces."
Abdul Hassan	Abdul Hassan is a Black male between the ages of 23 and 25. He graduated from a small-private PWI within the Southern Region. He graduated in 2019 with a cumulative GPA of 3.3 and a degree in Global Health and Global Development. Abdul is a student who demonstrates extreme commitment and resilience in facing challenges, which significantly contributes to his overall success.	Abdul's speech was elevated with a more excited tone when discussing his connections around his fraternity on campus. Abdul smiled when talking about the academic expectations and support from his parents. His eyes widened when expressing how he would go to the park every night on-campus to decompress. Abdul had a slight smile when discussing the enjoyment of being in nature helped center and refocus his attention on academics. He also spoke with confidence about his overall direction in life and the goals he has set for himself.
Chris Jackson	Chris Jackson is a Black male between the ages of 24–27. Chris graduated from a small-private PWI in the Northeastern Region. He identified as a first-generation college student. Chris graduated in 2020 with a cumulative GPA of 3.7 and a degree in Accounting. He graduated towards the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chris is an individual that relies on his habits, goals, and self-discipline to create high levels of success in his life. The stories Chris presented throughout his collegiate career	Chris gave off a serious tone when discussing his academic work and the routines he employed to pursue academic success. His demeanor also conveyed a degree of intense passion for developing opportunities through intentional focus, drive, and commitment. His unequivocal stance on being accountable and pushing himself towards goal completion demonstrated his ability to create a strategic plan and hit specific milestones to advance his life.

	demonstrated his extreme drive, commitment to personal growth, and solid ability to execute his goals.	
Myers Lee	Myers Lee is a Black male between the ages of 26 and 28. He graduated from a medium-public PWI within the Northeastern Region. He graduated in 2017 with a cumulative GPA of 3.1. The participant attained a degree in Computer Science and Computer Security and minors in Math and Spanish. Myers demonstrated adaptability and created a healthy inner dialogue that aided him in achieving his academic goals.	Myers had an easygoing demeanor. He also came across as energetic when discussing his narrative. He slightly emphasized his experience with being surrounded by all Black teachers during elementary school and paused after stating this. I then asked him what that was like, and he said it felt "homey." He began to slow his speech and look down when discussing his difficulties in his senior year of high school. Myers had more energy and raised the inflection of his voice when he discussed moving past the problems of the transition to college and reverting to the habits and routines he knew worked for him.
Clark Wayne	Clark Wayne is a Black male between the ages of 21 and 23. He graduated from a large-public PWI within the Midwestern Region. Clark graduated in 2022 with a cumulative GPA of 3.4 and a degree in Business Administration. He graduated towards the secondary stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges of navigating a PWI that lacked a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, Clark drew upon his religious faith and leadership abilities to forge a path forward. Clark is well-versed in the history of his heritage and used it to create a positive concept of self and attain academic achievement.	Clark spoke about the historical aspects of his Black Culture in an emotionally charged way (which I say not with a negative connotation, but in a way that captivated my attention). He quite effectively presented historical facts and explained generational trauma for Black Americans. As he spoke, I saw how he utilized his collegiate journey to become introspective and reflect on his heritage. Clark noted that one of his college professors made him complete an assignment that conflicted with his religious practices. When he spoke about this act of discrimination, his serious tone communicated a sense of injustice.
	Sully Woods is a Black male between the ages of 21 and 23. He graduated from a small-private PWI	I noticed Sully spoke with conviction when issues surrounding bias-related incidents arose in the

Sully Woods	within the Northeastern Region. Sully graduated in 2021 with a cumulative GPA of 3.22, a dual degree in Religion and Government, and a Legal Studies minor. Furthermore, he graduated one year after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sully served as a change agent at his institution, fighting against racial discrimination and inequity in his campus community. He tactfully addressed bias-related incidents and educated his community to promote cultural sensitivity and inclusion on his campus.	interview. Although his facial expressions and body language expressed disappointment and indignation for the racially charged incidents on his college campus, I noticed a sense of pride and genuine devotion to educating others about these sensitive issues.
Attys Yrrab	Attys Yrrab is a Black male between the ages of 26 and 28. He graduated from a large-public HBCU within the Mid-Atlantic Region. Attys identifies as a first-generation student. He graduated in 2017 with a cumulative GPA of 3.4 and a degree in Sociology. Through listening to Attys' narrative, he conveyed a sense of strength and dedication to his academic work and other collegiate commitments. Attys persevered through a couple of highly difficult challenges. Then he used his learned focus from participating in Track and expectations from his family to drive his academic success in college.	Attys came across as a calm and mellow individual. I believe his easygoing nature speaks to his ability to overcome challenges, such as the specific, deeply challenging incidents that he went through during college. During his interview, there was a point when he discussed the Black Lives Matter protests and how his college's president went out to assist students in cleaning up the local community from any vandalism from the separate set of individuals engaging in vandalism. Attys became more animated in his gestures and emphasized certain words such as "it was huge to see the president show up." Attys' eyes enlarged when discussing having surgery during college and still attending class, attributing that to his participation in sports. I felt he was communicating through his body language that he is an individual who executes and pushes through difficult circumstances.

Table 4.5

Latinx Male Participant Profiles and Researcher Observations

Latinx Male Participant Profiles and Researcher Observations		
Participants' Pseudonym	**Participants' Profile**	**Researcher Observations**
Mike Brown	Mike Brown is a Latinx male between the ages of 22–25. He attended a small-private (Christian) HSI in the Northeastern Region. Mike graduated in 2022 with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 and a degree in Nursing. He graduated during the secondary part of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, he embraced the challenge of studying for STEM-related courses. Mike exhibits empathy, thoughtfulness, and a keen awareness of his surroundings. Furthermore, he displayed an ability to create pathways, despite complications, to attain academic success.	When Mike spoke, there was an emphasis on communicating his experiences of discrimination or inequity within his college or pre-college environments. When he discussed faculty or staff that supported his academic affairs, he spoke with more ease. There was a moment where Mike discussed a moment of being othered by his peers. He highlighted an experience with a group project; everyone had to pair up. However, he was unfortunately left out and said he had to tell the professor, "I don't have a group." At that point in the interview, he became more animated when speaking about this experience, shrugged his shoulder when communicating what he expressed to the professor, and paused for a moment.
Lewis Fournier	Lewis Fournier is a Latinx male between the ages of 26 and 28. He graduated from a large-public PWI within the Northeastern Region. He graduated in 2019 with a cumulative GPA of 3.3 and a degree in Actuarial Science. Lewis was steadfast and endured a problematic grade school experience. He was intrinsically motivated to attain academic success. Lewis holds education in high regard and demonstrated that through his academic narrative.	Lewis began the interview in an even tone yet had a fast pace. He discussed his path to college—fraught with conflict and learning in a highly disruptive high school. For almost the entirety of the interview, Lewis spoke at a fast pace. However, he briefly paused when he discussed how a student at his high school stabbed another student with a pencil. I interpreted the brief pause as a way for him to underscore his disbelief at the stabbing. When discussing the low bar set by his high

		school peers (not attending class and not doing work), his facial expressions suggested that he believed these actions were absurd. I came to that conclusion regarding his facial expressions due to how he emoted, his tone, and the fact that he strongly values higher education. He resumed his even tone during the section where Lewis spoke about his college experiences.
Steve Hamlet	Steve Hamlet is a Latinx male between 22–25 years old. He graduated from a large-public PWI within the Southern Region. Steve identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2022 with a cumulative GPA of 3.3 and a degree in Mechanical Engineering with, Minor in Entrepreneurship. This participant graduated towards the secondary stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Steve had an extraordinary amount of perseverance over highly challenging circumstances. He expertly navigated obstacles presented by COVID-19, housing, and food security.	Steve conveyed humility while discussing his narrative. While speaking about impactful experiences that informed his overall success, he projected a serious and passionate demeanor discussing his time with the Boy Scouts of America. When asked how he could handle the stress of dealing with housing insecurity, a challenging major, and the COVID-19 Pandemic, he laughed and stated, “I honestly don’t know.” He spoke about balancing his work and executing his goals when pressed further. I realized that he can hyper-focus on his end goal without fixating on the difficulties of the situation.
Mike Lowrey	Mike Lowery is a Latinx male between the ages of 27 and 29. He graduated from a large-public PWI within the Northeastern Region. Mike identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2017 with a cumulative GPA of 3.2 and a degree in Biology with a concentration in Neuroscience. Mike displayed a high level of ambition and initiative during his undergraduate years and had deeply enriching academic experiences through both in-class and co-curricular activities.	Mike Lowrey was open during his interview, with a wealth of academic knowledge and a range of experiences. He projected a sense of pride in his academic accomplishments yet was humble in presenting them. During his interview, Mike outlined his co-curricular activities as essential in creating engaging and formative experiences. As Mike remembered his three-year-long medical internship, he squinted his eyes when he expressed the amount of work that went into the application. In conjunction with his statement right before noting how he felt before

		transferring to his 4-year college, “I was really proud of myself; I was the only person from a community college there.” I interpreted his expressions as an acknowledgment of his hard work.
Martin Quinn	Martin Quinn is a Latinx male between the ages of 25 and 27. He graduated from a large-public PWI within the Northeastern Region. Martin identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2019 with a cumulative GPA of 3.15 and a degree in Financial Mathematics. Martin is an individual who eventually preserved by learning how to adapt to the difference in his unique learning style. Although he initially struggled to find his footing in college, he began actively participating in his academic success. He attained success by utilizing resources and embracing challenges.	During Martin’s interview, it was hard to read his expressions at times due to his stoic expression. He continued to smile when discussing his academic difficulties in college, such as encountering problems with his Calculus course toward the beginning of the interview. At one point, Martin smiled when he stated: “I wasn’t really sure what I was doing in life.” I interpreted these smiles as a defense mechanism when asked to recall moments that may have brought shame due to accomplishing the grades he wanted. He became vague in the middle of the interview when discussing “bad influences” in college and increased the amount of smiling when answering. When I asked if Martin wanted to clarify his meaning regarding the “bad influences,” he put on a more serious facial expression at one point.
Alex Ortiz	Alex Ortiz is a Latinx male between the ages of 21 and 23. He graduated from a small-private PWI within the Northeastern Region. Alex identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2022 with a cumulative GPA of 3.15 and a degree in Spanish with a Minor in Photography. Alex graduated towards the secondary stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. He was a leader who dedicated much of his time to forming significant connections with his peers. Furthermore, Alex was	Throughout Alex’s interview, he spoke enthusiastically about his photography work. It was evident through his body language, such as hand gestures, that added to the lively retelling of his college experience. He recounted stories of his time as a Resident Assistant with a wide smile and expressed overall joy.

	a creative student with an artistic eye that fueled his passion for photography.	
Pedro Rivera	Pedro Rivera is a Latinx male within the age range of 23–25 years old. He moved from Puerto Rico to the U.S. to attend a small private (Catholic) PWI. Pedro graduated with a degree in Sport Management in 2019. Ultimately, he excelled academically at his institution while being a committed member of his college's baseball team. Pedro was a highly adaptable leader who could forge a new life away from being close to his tight support systems.	Pedro was expressive in his tone and body language during his interview. I thought he was a strong-willed, extraordinarily adaptable, and disciplined individual. I asked, "When did the mindset of being self-driven start for you, and how did that transfer to your bachelor's degree?" He responded, in part, the U.S. National Guard deployed his father at age ten. When Pedro discussed the topic of his father's deployment, his eyes widened. Then he went on to talk about the impact of him feeling the weight of more responsibility at an early age. I believe the sudden jolt to his nuclear family left a lasting impression and, through his facial expressions, conveyed the fact this was a critical juncture in his life. In response to how Pedro overcame a significant academic challenge in college, he spoke about a natural disaster. He began rubbing his forehead when discussing Hurricane Maria, which hit Puerto Rico, where his family resided during his tenure in college. Analyzing his body language suggested another powerful event in his life. I believe rubbing his head indicated he was self-soothing at that moment.
Joe Rodriguez	Joe Rodriguez is a Latinx male between the ages of 23 and 25. He graduated from a small-private PWI in the Northeastern Region. Joe identified as a first-generation college student. His graduation year was 2019, with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 and a degree in Exercise Science. He was an active campus community member with an extroverted and adventurous personality. Joe conveyed an	During the interview, there were a few moments he became enlightened upon reflecting on his experiences, which was communicated by his facial expression. When I asked Joe if he had to do it all over again would he get his bachelor's? Joe, again, through his facial expression, furrowed his eyebrows, lowered his head, and said with conviction, "Oh, definitely, definitely." His eyebrows then went up when he described how he

	outstanding level of personal growth and development during his collegiate experience through his narrative.	was trying to fit in with his White Peers, but he realized, "Wow, this is not who I really am." Then later stated: "I am a straight-up Spanish Kid on-campus." Joe's expressive demeanor conveyed an overall joy regarding his college experience.
Andrew Smith	Andrew Smith is a Latinx male between the ages of 25 and 27. He graduated from a small-private PWI in the Northeastern Region. Andrew identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2019 with a cumulative GPA of 3.2 and a degree in Computer Science. Andrew is heavily invested in the development of technical knowledge within his field. He is also highly driven and intellectually curious. Andrew uses his strong bond with his mother and acquired skillset to build a successful life.	During Andrew's interview, I experienced him conveying his college experience with an appreciative tone and excitement when speaking about experiences such as his internships and self-directed learning related to topics in his field. He recounted the experience of meeting and studying abroad with his mentor with a degree of fondness. Finally, Andrew demonstrated deference, tenderness, and deep respect by communicating his mother's support throughout his academic journey.
Daniel Vazquez	Daniel Vazquez is a Latinx male between the ages of 22 and 24. He graduated from a large-public PWI within the Northeastern Region. Daniel identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2021 with a cumulative GPA of 3.48 and a degree in Mechanical Engineering. This participant graduated one year after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Daniel is an individual that exudes humility. He had drawn upon the strength of his family along with his respectful and appreciative attitude to attain academic success.	Daniel came across as having an agreeable personality. He was highly expressive with his hand gestures. I found it interesting that most of his hand gestures indicated forward movement. His hand gestures aligned with his interview, focusing on creating his future and goal attainment. I had the impression that he was a person that is intentional and strategic about enacting and achieving his goals.

Research Findings

In previous chapters, I have argued that "not one size fits all" concerning the academic support of Black and Latinx college males. In the following discussion, I will:

- List and elaborate on the main and sub-themes for all study participants.
- Continue separating Black and Latinx participants and present findings for each group.

Presentation of Overarching Themes and Sub-Themes

Figures 4.1 through 4.6 reveal the five overarching (main) themes and 16 sub-themes I constructed. My explanation of how I constructed the themes will be discussed in the section: *Commonalities Amongst Participants & Exploration of Themes.*

Figure 4.1

Overarching Themes and Sub-Themes

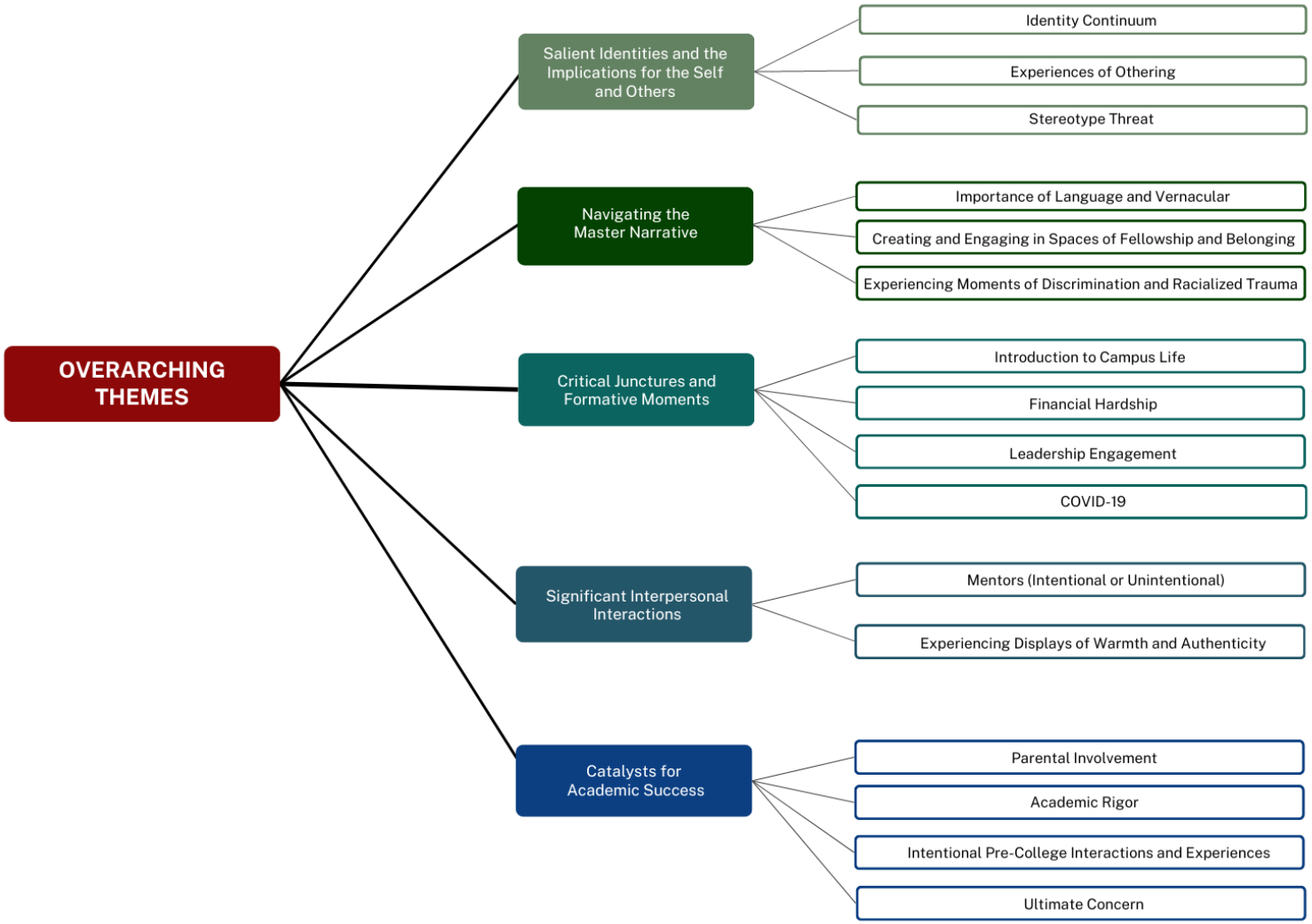


Figure 4.2

Main Theme 1: Salient Identities and the Implication for the Self and Others

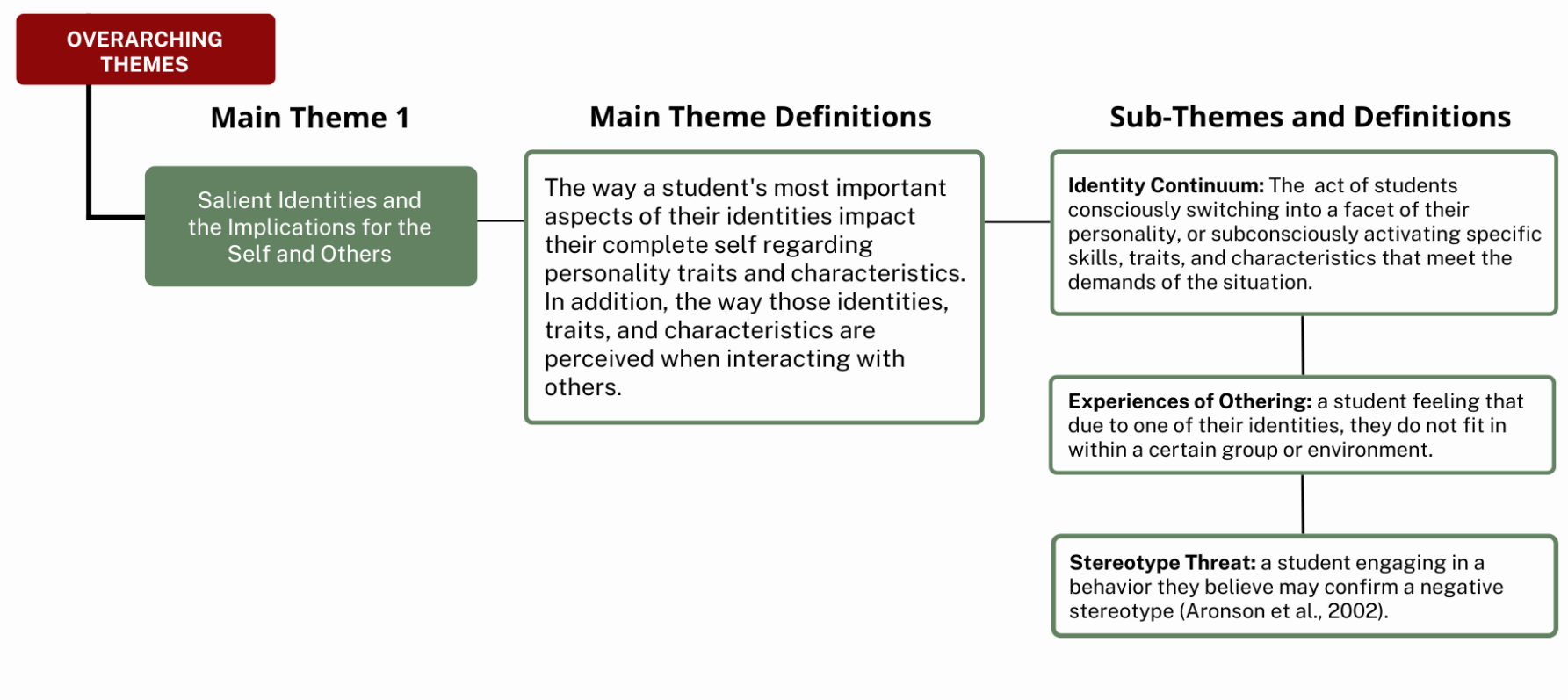


Figure 4.3

Main Theme 2: Navigating the Master Narrative: Tension, Fatigue and Renewed Spirit in Maneuvering Within White Spaces

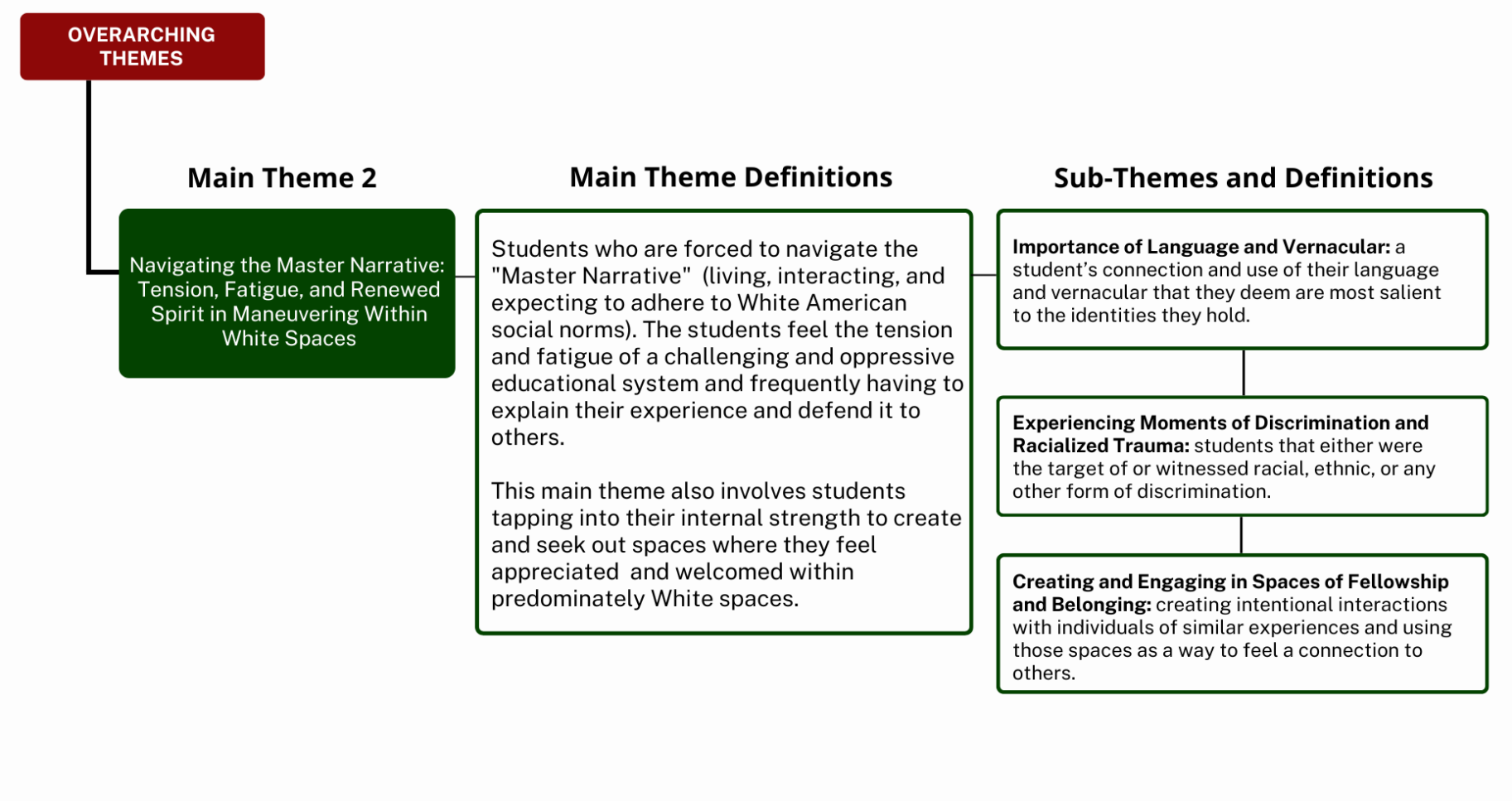


Figure 4.4

Main Theme 3: Critical Junctures and Formative Moments

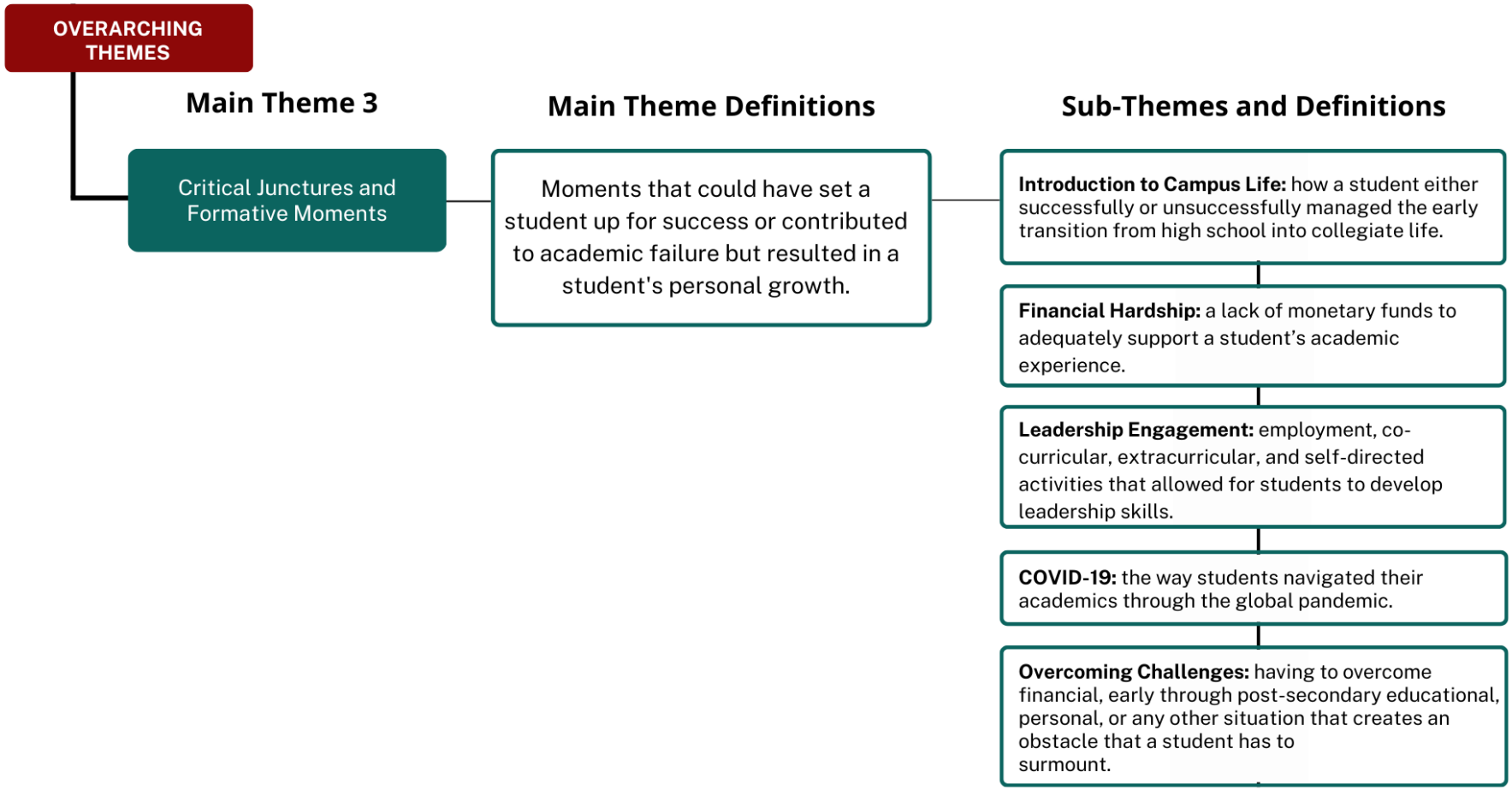


Figure 4.5

Main Theme 4: Significant Interpersonal Interactions

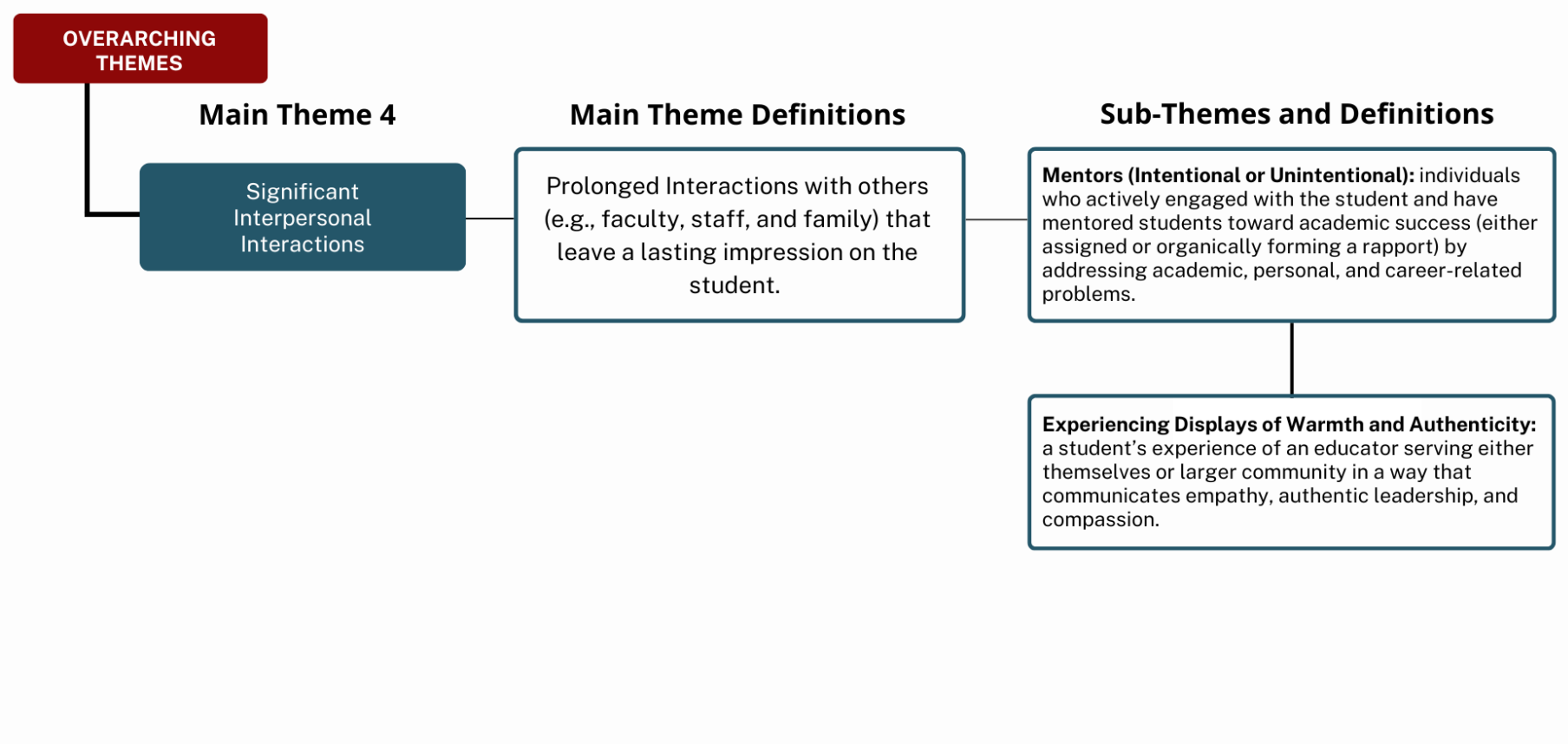
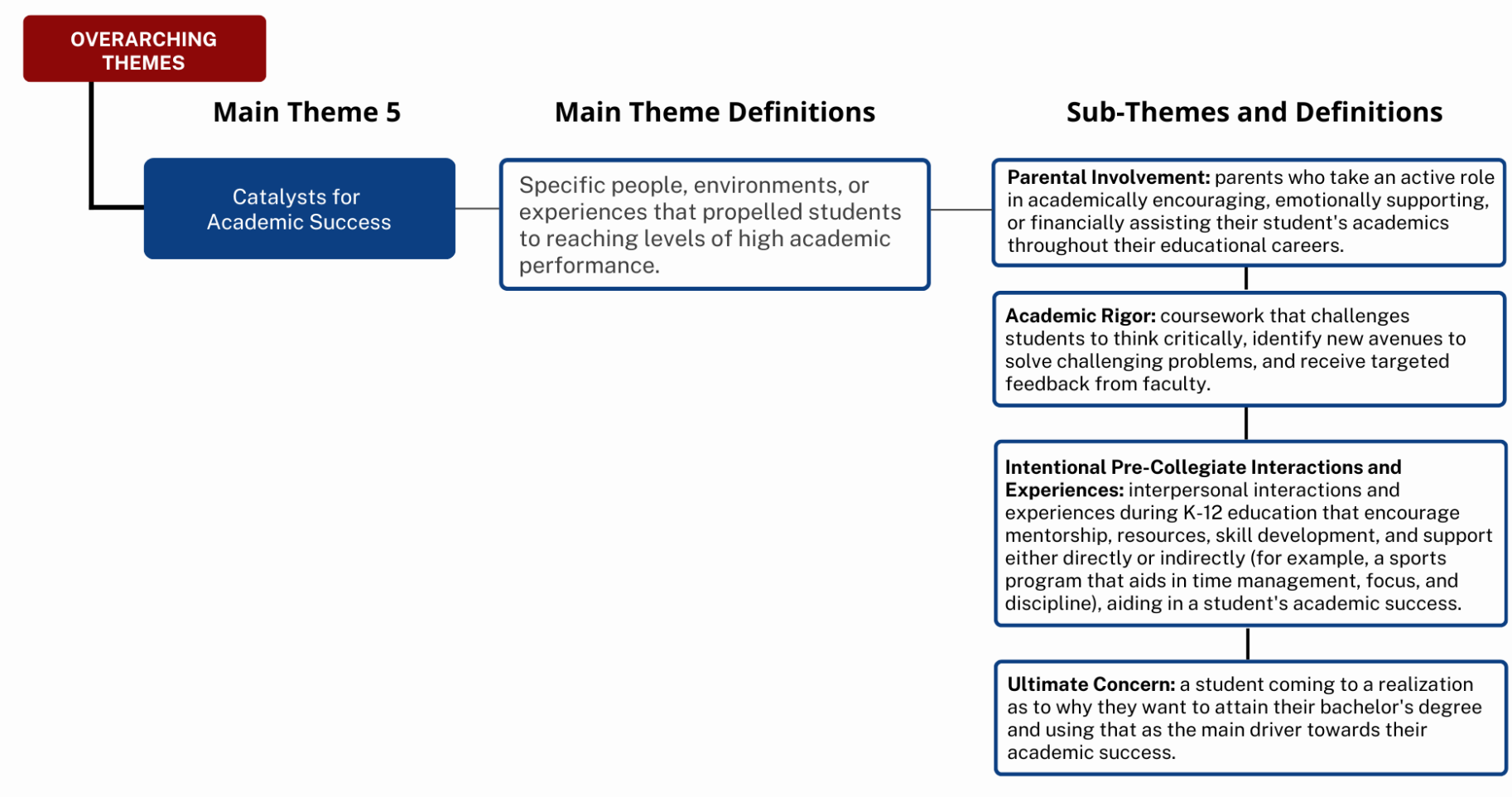


Figure 4.6

Main Theme 5: Catalysts for Academic Success



Commonalities Amongst Participants & Exploration of Themes

I will expound upon the main themes and sub-themes I constructed in the section below. I describe the overall findings from all participants and do not separate the themes, at first, based on their racial or ethnic identities. The themes are as follows:

Main Theme 1: Salient Identities and the Implications for the Self and Others

In Chapter II, I argued that Black and Latinx males have complex identities. However, I did not expect the various ways those identities were triggered and presented based on their lived experiences. An act of discrimination, for example, could trigger the Black and Latinx males' identities or preceptions (e.g., being laughed at for getting an answer wrong by White peers prompting a stereotype threat response–engaging in a high-performance mentality) or being "othered" (having the feeling of not being accepted or excluded by the majority group). One aspect consistent in all the participants' narratives was their various identities, such as: racial and ethnic identity, college student, son, campus leader, sexuality, athlete, etc.

After analyzing how these participants showed up in the world and, more specifically, their campus environments, I constructed the first main theme of Salient Identities and the Implications for the Self and Others. All 20 participants communicated their various identities as an essential part of their narratives. Upon unpacking the layers of each participant's experience, it was evident that some aspects of their identities impacted how others perceived them. For instance, a student's Black or Latinx identity could be viewed by their White peers as inferior and only capable of admittance to college through athletics or affirmative action. Participants spoke, embracing specific identities based on the context of the situation they encountered. Attachment to particular identities, for example, viewing themselves as

high-performing and external feedback from those around them significantly contributed to academic excellence for Black and Latinx males.

Sub-Themes of Salient Identities and the Implications for the Self and Others

Sub-Theme 1—Identity Continuum

This sub-theme relates to Black and Latinx males' ability to switch into a facet of their personality when needed to address a situation was one of the sub-themes that aided them in their collegiate experience. The males' narratives provided insight into something present throughout all interviews—each participant held onto a particular set of identities developed to handle specific situations appropriately. Identity Continuum is a new term I created, drawing inspiration from W. E. B. Du Bois' (1903) notion of double consciousness. With the help of one of my Data Analysts, Stephanie Fox, I constructed this new term to explain how the participants' maneuvered their institutions, often elaborate social, political, and academic landscapes. For each participant, their ability to access and embrace the identity of a leader or executor, in some cases, would allow them to achieve demanding academic goals that require focus, persistence, and critical thinking. An example of a participant switching into a facet of their identity to address a situation is Attys Yrrab and an accident he had during college. Some excerpts from participant interviews that exemplify this notion can be found below:

- Attys described his thoughts surrounding the accident by stating, "got hit by a car… I was fine. I felt some soreness, had a little fracture in my hip bone, but it wasn't bad. I'm a football guy, so those little things, I'm just like, "All right, I'm good." I brush it off." He then noted how his football identity enabled him to persist academically: "academically, no. I'm able to separate certain things. I even had surgery my senior year, and I was still going to class the day after surgery."

> Leroy Casanova described his ability to execute tasks, essentially embracing a high-performer mindset, and as he said in his interview, "I have a standard to uphold…" He ended his thought by describing his activities while upholding his standard: "I can do business, whole programs, whole service-like projects, and tutor kids, and play football, and do all this stuff, and still succeed… I know what I'm capable of."

Sub-Theme 2—Experiences of Othering

Most participants felt their presence was quite notable to others. At times, each participant's lived experience wildly differed from their White peers' suburban neighborhoods and affluent school districts. Thus, it creates unspoken friction between the Black and Latinx and White students, faculty, and staff. White individuals' body language and actions often suggested a sense of Black and Latinx males feeling unwelcomed in their educational environments. For example, Clark Wayne experienced being excluded from group work at his Mid-Western college institution by his White peers. After Clark's White Peer group provided various false reasons for excluding him from their group work, serious racial undertones appeared to stem from that negative interaction.

The participant's ability to navigate predominately White spaces was an ongoing discussion point. The Black and Latinx males almost always related their exposure to navigating White spaces to prior interpersonal interactions with White individuals earlier in life. For White students, it was also evident, through the participants that reported discussing educational experiences with their White Peers, that the less amount of racial and ethnic diversity in their K-12 experiences equated to, at minimum, a reluctance to interact with peers outside their racial identity. At most, White students who lacked exposure to diverse populations often espoused

ignorant beliefs regarding Black and Latinx students' academic prowess. Therefore, White peers, faculty, and staff "othered" both marginalized populations and reproduced harmful narratives and negative attitudes. An additional example is drawn from Mike Brown's narrative. Mike Brown delved into the experience of feeling othered by his White classmates—"Where I'm from is a high crime area, there's drugs, murdering, everything you can think of. So, I feel like whenever I would say that I'm from [Location Redacted], they would look a certain way." He continued on by stating the body language his White peers would convey when his hometown was revealed—"Like oh, he must be a criminal or something like that… they had their own little groups and cliques, and it was just hard to fit in with them because it felt like also there was nothing in common."

Sub-Theme 3—Stereotype Threat

This sub-theme was constructed since at least half of the participants reported feelings of "being the only one" in class, whether Black or Latinx. Participants, such as Mike Brown and Andrew Smith, reported being in K-12 school districts that Black and Latinx students comprised most of the student demographic. Students who entered a PWI, having come from grade school districts with low White student enrollment, may be particularly jarred when learning within White spaces. Some participants who experienced stereotype threat, such as Chris Jackson, stated: "It's a small private school, predominantly all-white, obviously the only African American in my class." Chris then expressed how his status as the only African American in class drove him to success: "that was my drive … I wanted to show everyone that I can do the same thing as them, especially . . . African Americans don't always get the best rep … when it comes to academics. So, that kind of drove me."

Main Theme 2: Navigating the Master Narrative: Tension, Fatigue, and Renewed Spirit in Maneuvering Within White Spaces

As I reflected on the collective data, I encountered difficulty expressing ways to convey some of the experiences of the participants accurately. The more iterations I went through of themes, the more I realized that it is impossible to write about each male's experience in a manner that touches upon both the depth and subtleties of emotions felt. Discussing the range of participants' emotions is especially true for those who do not identify with those specific identities. Thus, the theme of *Navigating the Master Narrative: Tension, Fatigue, and Renewed Spirit in Maneuvering Within White Spaces* was constructed to address the concerns above.

Every participant had experiences that, although others could perhaps identify or relate to aspects or even as a whole, still, each person sees the world through their particular lens. Tension and fatigue are sometimes difficult for the student to process and articulate the depth of impact on their sense of self. The impact may be especially challenging to convey to others due to the unique perspective everyone holds (which is grounded in their lived experiences). For example, when Martin Quinn discussed his issue of struggling to remember class material. Some people may think they have a firm grasp of a problem like memory recall. Yet, since Martin self-identified as having ADHD, another person would not be able to fully comprehend how his neurodivergence presented a barrier to traditional forms of educational instruction (those that do not account for neurodiversity in the classroom).

Sub-Themes of Navigating the Master Narrative: Tension, Fatigue, and Renewed Spirit in Maneuvering Within White Spaces

Sub-Theme 1—Importance of Language and Vernacular

Most participants divulged how language and vernacular within their communities were essential in feeling understood on campus. I found it necessary to construct this sub-theme since

the ways participants articulate their thoughts and emotions are vital to their learning. Participants connecting with others who either spoke Spanish as a first or second language or used the same vernacular allowed them to express themselves effortlessly without encountering internal tension. Sometimes the inner tension may stem from feeling as though they were losing a substantial part of their identity, like in the case of Joe Rodriguez, the importance placed on speaking Spanish to others. In the case of Leroy Casanova, being mindful of institutions' unspoken expectations of code-switching—the select words and manner in which one must speak to be accepted by the majority group. During Leroy's interview, he stated the following: "So, initially first coming in, again, being my authentic self, I'm talking ... I wouldn't in certain scenarios. For the most part, I'm talking how I usually talk, like how ...My influence, so my culture, where I'm from." He went on to convey what his White peers at his PWI (his first institution) thought manner or speech: "they think that I have an accent. I know I don't have an accent. But to them, I have an accent. I'm not going to change the way that I talk. I'm not going to change my quote-unquote accent." Alex Ortiz illustrated how language could impact a Latinx student who speaks Spanish at a PWI: "I grew up in a place where you could speak Spanish all your life, not know a lick of English, and you'd be able to get by. Being able to introduce myself to many different individuals definitely has culture shock."

Sub-Theme 2—Experiencing Moments of Discrimination and Racialized Trauma

This sub-theme was constructed to address the various excerpts within the transcripts that highlight moments of discrimination during college. Unfortunately, most participants were subjected to discrimination, ranging from their religious practices to their sexuality. One example was when Clark Wayne was academically reprimanded for asking for an alternate assignment that did not interfere with his regular practice of attending church on Sundays, especially during

the holiday season. The request led to an adverse reaction from the professor, who questioned why Clark could not miss even one day of church. Another participant, Trey Douglas, experienced discrimination by his roommate based on his identity as a gay male: “He pretty much just alienated me from much of this space by putting both of the closets and the desks in the center of the room in a way that I had never seen done before. So, I wouldn’t see what was going on across the way.” Some participants conveyed their experiences as anxiety-provoking, upsetting, or unjust.

Sub-Theme 3—Creating and Engaging in Spaces of Fellowship and Belonging

Upon reviewing the transcripts, I created this sub-theme since belonging was integral to all participants’ college experiences. I selected to include the words “creating” and “engaging” because there were moments when they created those spaces if access to specific groups or activities was not readily available. For example, Joe Rodriguez described his experience forming a fraternity on campus: “I founded my Latino fraternity on campus. There was an opportunity for you out there, and there were ways to make you feel at home.” Joe also underscored the importance of being around others he could identify with: “And I found my group of people on campus, and I was like, “Wow, this is where I feel way more comfortable.” Once I made that self-discovery, I was just like, “Wow, this is who I am.” I’m a straight-up, really Spanish kid on campus.”

Main Theme 3: Critical Junctures and Formative Moments

Throughout all individuals’ lives, there always prove to be moments that are impressed upon their memory and become known as critical moments. These moments can also be highly formative in developing one’s skills, mindset, and approach toward learning. When constructing the Critical Junctures and Formative Moments theme, aspects of the participants’ narratives gave

me pause. Each participant, at one point or another, was presented with a challenge that could have permanently veered in theme in a different direction leading them to academic failure. Yet, they managed to pool their internal and external resources to approach the obstacle(s) presented before them and leveraged them as an opportunity for growth and motivation to achieve academically.

Although not all participants noted racialized trauma within their institutions, it is evident, as presented in Chapter II, the various ways institutions in America perpetuate racist systems. Also, it is important to note that while some Latinx students experienced discrimination, they did not cite any feelings of racialized trauma. In my opinion, participants did not describe experiences of racialized trauma due to the U.S. government's classified most Latinx individuals as White as their race. So, while Latinx participants in this study may not have stated it, how systemic racism affects this population within the higher education system also prompted my inclusion of the sub-theme. When constructing the sub-theme of Racialized Trauma from Collegiate Environments, I utilized my knowledge from the literature, some participant narratives that explicitly state racial issues, and my reflexivity as an Afro-Latinx male student and professional experience in the higher education field. For example, participant Sully Woods shared an experience of racialized trauma at his collegiate institution: "One, my sophomore year, I was at a party with some of our teammates, and one of the guys came up to me and called me the N-word. And I remember after that; nobody really understood why I was upset."

Sub-Themes of Critical Junctures and Formative Moments

Sub-Theme 1—Introduction to Campus Life

I constructed this sub-theme because this was a pivotal point where all participants experienced a relatively smooth transition or hardship when acclimating to college life. Some

participants, such as Myers Lee and Clark Wayne, initially struggled to transition into their respective college environments. Clark Wayne Stated the following about his transition into college: “my first year of college, I was academically dismissed … I was able to get back in…. But I would say, ironically, the lack of support I felt as a Black student at a predominantly White institution.” Steve Hamlet, however, discussed how acclimating to his college environment was straightforward: “The transition was easy, like I said my high school really prepared me for the workload, so by the time I went to college it wasn’t challenging … that transition from high school to college was not a problem.”

Sub-Theme 2—Financial Hardship

I included this sub-theme because it was a reoccurring piece that played an essential role in most of the participants’ narratives; however, it aligns with the existing body of research on Black and Latinx issues surrounding finances. For some, such as: Clark, Eldrick, Edgar, and Sully, finances were not a critical part of their narrative. Yet, for the remaining participants, access to financial resources played a vital role in how students attained their academic goals. For instance, Mike Brown had issues obtaining a book needed for class and needed to find alternate ways of accessing the material. Steve Hamlet went through many housing security challenges during his undergraduate degree, citing that he was staying on his friends’ couches. Another participant, Myers Lee, emphasized his scholarship as vital to staying in college. Finally, Trey Douglas spoke to the challenges HBCUs face regarding access to institutional resources compared to PWIs. Colleges did provide resources that aided both populations (the Equal Opportunity Fund). Still, due to the high financial need of Black and Latinx students, they could not receive the total funding needed to redirect their focus solely to academics and activities of interest.

Sub-Theme 3—Leadership Engagement

Almost all participants engaged in leadership engagement (activity, on-campus organization, sport, or co-curricular program). Thus, I created the sub-theme of *Leadership Engagement* because I believe the two words encapsulate the degree of tenacity, motivation, and commitment the participants' have when navigating a heightened level of responsibility while focusing on coursework. Some participants are deeply connected to their selected activity or program. The participants found a sense of purpose, self-development, and in many cases belonging within those leadership environments. Black and Latinx males undergoing a collection of moments focused on students developing skills that evoked passion, excitement, challenging tasks, emotional intelligence, and growing through failures enabled them to bring those lessons into their coursework and excel. Sports acted as a way to maintain focus and hone time management skills for some participants, such as Attys, Chris, Eldrick, Mike Brown, Leroy, Nathaniel, and Pedro. Others, such as: Abdul; Divine Nine Fraternity, Andrew; prominent internships, Alex; Resident Assistant, Joe; Resident Assistant and study abroad; and Steve Hamlet, off-campus work as a Real Estate agent, experienced varying degrees of transferable skills that they implemented in class. Abdul, for example, highlighted that his status within his fraternity symbolized someone who could balance their social life while demonstrating academic excellence. Alex Ortiz discussed his experience being an on-campus leader: "I was able to collaborate with other fellow student and student leaders to organize events that would educate members of the college* community, as well as get them engaged." The participant ended by providing his thoughts on the impact of leading others: "when you get creative, and you find ways to really capture people's attention, then you really have the stage that you're setting yourself up on to educate and teach others." Abdul Hassan discussed how his leadership

experience within his Black fraternity is a part of the Divine Nine—a collection a Black Fraternities and Sororities. He revealed how the fraternity aided in his academic goals: "just being involved with like-minded people within the divine nine, like, just having a communal type of organization where everybody was kind of like focus on similar goals." Abdul concluded his thought by noting the goals of his fraternity brothers: "we're actively looking and looking to build bonds with other people who all have a shared vision and shared purpose to be in education, and want to essentially make the world a better place."

Sub-Theme 4—COVID-19

The global COVID-19 pandemic highlighted inequities among students who may not have had the technology to support the transition to online learning. I constructed the sub-theme *COVID-19* because although this dissertation was not intended to delve into the massive implications of the global pandemic, it did end up impacting the academic performance of some participants. Primarily, students such as Mike Brown struggled with technology issues due to inadequate computer hardware, which interfered with a learning environment conducive to producing academic success. Although not all participants in this study were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic due to a difference in graduation years, those who were involved, such as: Alex Ortiz, Clark Wayne, Mike Brown, Leroy, Chris, Daniel, Nathaniel, Steve, and Sully, were affected differently with varying degrees of positive and negative effects.

For example, Clark and Steve reported mostly having positive outcomes from the pandemic. Sully did not respond strongly to COVID-19 in either direction, and Leroy's interview did not even touch upon the pandemic. One example of how COVID-19 affected academic work is Alex; he stated:

> I was struggling with my mental health, my emotional health, my physical health to the point where I … did decide to seek help through the counseling center…. You can then see how that impact is correlated to the pandemic.

Alex then discussed his difficulty attending classes:

> Well, it was tough. Some days were just really hard to get out of bed. I would wake up at 9:00 AM early for my class, could not get out of bed until 2:00 PM, skipped class, I just couldn't get out. I did end up failing for the first time one of my classes.

The rest of the participants (Alex, Mike Brown, Daniel, and Nathaniel) encountered challenges ranging from interrupting co-curricular activities to affecting their mental health, which will be discussed in their respective participant highlights in Appendix I.

Main Theme 4: Significant Interpersonal Interactions

Interactions that are positive, empathic, and supportive are arguably the cornerstone of effective student engagement. In most participants' narratives, some interactions empowered, inspired, and re-focused students toward their academic goals. As I held the literature on institutional agents in mind, I reviewed each participant's transcript, which yielded a reoccurring pattern of people directly or indirectly influencing most participants' lives. The realization of how instrumental faculty, staff, and internal or external mentors can be led to constructing main theme 4—*Significant Interpersonal Interactions*.

Sub-Themes of Significant Interpersonal Interactions

Sub-Theme 1—Mentors (Intentional or Unintentional)

Except for Martin Quinn and Steve Hamlet, almost all had influential mentors during their collegiate careers that aided their academic success. I specifically named this sub-theme *Influential Mentors* because, although they are referred to as institutional agents or faculty mentors in the literature, I find it necessary to highlight the intentional or unintentional nature of the student and mentor relationship. After all, unlike a faculty or staff-assigned mentor, some

relationships are formed organically through everyday interactions. Most participants had an individual on campus who instilled a sense of wisdom and empowerment and created curiosity surrounding unique extra-curricular or co-curricular programs.

Mike Lowrey spoke about his experience with a staff member who helped identify an opportunity to participate in an internship program that was a dual program with an Ivy League institution and medical hospital: “My mentor and ASAP told me about it. And I remember, he was like “do it like the next day, just apply, you got nothing to lose.” He ended by noting that encouragement is what made him apply to the program: “and I applied because it came out of nowhere, and he was just he told me, I was good to go because my grades were everything was good, so he said just do it.” Another participant, Andrew Smith, noted the impact his influential faculty mentor he had toward the beginning of his college experience: “so I, uh, really kind of point my success to… my early success to him, because… he believed in me; he saw the passion that I have for tech.”

Sub-Theme 2—Experiencing Displays of Authenticity and Warmth

All participants spoke to at least one individual, whether closely connected to them or not, that projected traits such as: a sense of approachability, empathy, genuine interest, and use of accessible language. Myers Lee discussed the impact of a faculty member’s welcoming approach to engaging with students—“she just made me feel like the same comfortability I felt talking to my mom about stuff. I felt like I could go to my professor* and talk to her.” Myers ended by stating, “I don’t know how else to say it other than she made you feel comfortable, and you knew it was a safe space where you could really talk to her.”

Main Theme 5: Catalysts for Academic Success

In creating the theme *Catalysts for Academic Success,* I took the information gleaned from my literature review. I then combined my learnings from numerous scholars on what drives academic success with pieces of each participant's narrative. There were four areas that I landed on, which became the four constructed sub-themes: (a) *Parental Involvement,* (b) *Academic Rigor,* (c) *Intentional Pre-Collegiate Interactions and Experiences,* and (d) *Ultimate Concern.* Each sub-theme speaks to the intentionality, in many cases early in the individuals' educational career, that produced successful outcomes in the lives of these Black and Latinx male graduates.

Sub-Themes of Catalysts for Academic Success

Sub-Theme 1—Parental Involvement

Parents serve as a driving force in their children's academic success. All participants noted that their parents added either positive or negative pressure (expressing that the family's future financial stability rests on their shoulders) that drove them to succeed. Without exception, the role modeling of hard work, sacrifice, and the nurturing they received throughout their lives. The qualities above led to their academic success in some form.

Sub-Theme 2—Academic Rigor

The data provided by participants reaffirmed the importance of having access to academically rigorous courses that force the students to think critically, engage with their professors more frequently, and push the limits of the participants' internal beliefs on their academic capabilities. As stated by some participants, Andrew and Leroy, rigor is also connected to the professors incorporating real-life scenarios in their courses. The rigor not only challenges the students but captivates their attention and piques their interest in learning more about the material when done intentionally and engagingly. An example of academic rigor is evident in

Leroy Casanova's narrative where he explained how his professor held his students accountable for their success—"he held you to a standard that he ... And that's, I guess, a phrase that he would say. He was like, "I'm not preparing you for my class. I'm preparing you for when you step out there."

Sub-Theme 3—Intentional Pre-Collegiate Interactions and Experiences

Every participant was affected by a positive or negative experience during their K-12 education. The resources dedicated by their school district or external programs provide skill development, such as building soft and technical skills and enforcing a college-going culture. Eldrick Bryant divulged in his interview that having experienced attending an academically rigorous private boarding school during high school positively impacted his future college success. He stated,

> It was a private day and boarding school, about five, 10 minutes away from my hometown, boarded my sophomore junior year, kind of just as getting the full experience, really seeing what it's like to live away from home, which goes a long way in kind of who I became, how that built me especially, how that prepared me for college.

Eldrick continued to discuss how the private boarding school developed and prepared him for college: "there's going to be some more challenges there in the actual curriculum, but then even outside the classroom itself, just the ways that the private school pushed me to evolve as a person." He concluded by stating, "At the private school, yes, it was about the academic success for you, but it was how can we teach you to evolve and grow as an actual individual as well."

Sub-Theme 4—Ultimate Concern

When I reflected upon the interviews, each participant held onto an idea or aspiration that acted as a driver for their collegiate success. Hence, why I constructed the sub-theme: *Ultimate Concern*; within the Extended Participant Profiles—Individual highlights (individual

highlights can be found within Appendix I), the vast majority had a substantial reason for wanting to succeed academically and complete their degree. The reasons ranged from honoring parents to wishing to facilitate a better way of life for themselves and future families. The participants drew inspiration and motivation to pull through times of difficulty and redirect their focus toward their academic achievement. Below are some excerpts from participants expressing their *Ultimate Concern* about attending college.

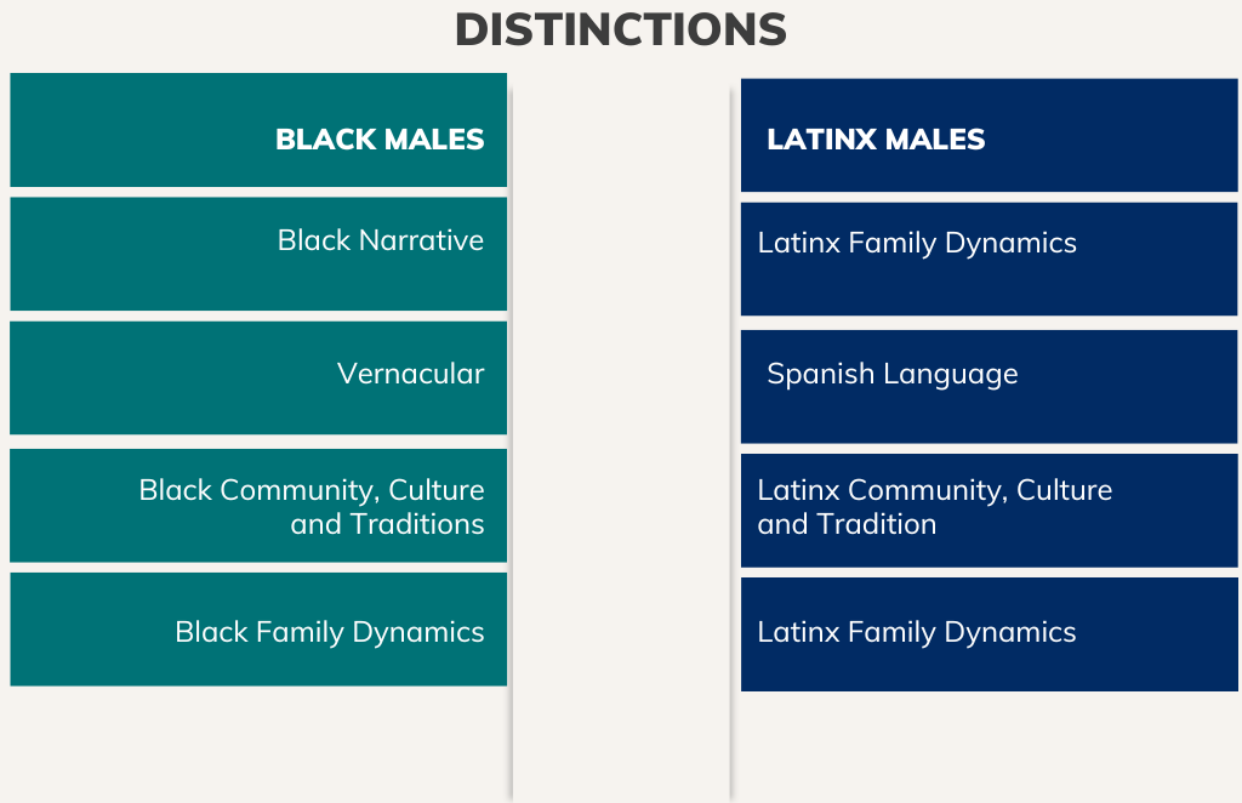
- **Trey Douglas:** "But more specifically as a black gay man. And I didn't want to let myself down. I didn't want to let my ancestors down." Trey ended by noting pushing himself for his parents: "I certainly, after changing my major four times, didn't want to let my parents down…. It's almost as if you've worked so hard for something that you have to see it through."
- **Mike Lowery:** "My main thing was just I wanted to be different than my parents. I wanted to be educated, and I just wanted to be proud of myself."
- **Daniel Vasquez:** "being able to go to school and have enough backing to become even more educated and pursue . . . . more complex jobs, which would eventually bring some type of stability into my family."
- **Abdul Hassan:** "To be able to support my family overall … For like our families, our environment, it's, like, you just know that there's a better life."

Points of Distinction for Black and Latinx Males

The following findings are grouped by participants' racial and ethnic backgrounds to highlight the points of distinction—where each group diverges concerning their academic and overall community needs. Figure 4.7 presents a quick overview of the main distinctions between the two populations.

Figure 4.7

Main Distinctions for Black and Latinx Males at a Glance



As previously noted, an overwhelming body of literature and research continues to place Black and Latinx male students within the same group. At times, I contend the racial and ethnic terms Black and Latinx begin to seem synonymous based on societal assumptions. Each group has similarities, but some particular aspects and nuances distinguish each. For example, some Latinx participants have strong ties to Spanish as a means not only to communicate everyday thoughts but also to express deep sentiments and feel a connection to their Latinx identity. Then for Black participants in this study, how their vernacular is seen as problematic within specific spaces and academic settings. Due to differences in agendas for the Black and Latinx communities (Black Lives Matter—except for those who identify as Afro-Latinx) would be an example of a distinguishing factor. An individual would be hard-pressed to argue that Black and

Latinx individuals have the exact needs. Both groups have different cultural celebrations, community leaders, beliefs, social norms, etc. Chapter V will further explore these distinctions.

In this section, I present the distinguishing factors based on findings from participant interviews. The factors will be separated by their respective populations (Black and Latinx males). I have also included these distinctions' potential impacts on each population's collegiate success. When appropriate, and with the participant's permission, I have included a location's actual—unredacted—name because this is a vital part of their narrative. Due to the reflexive nature of my data analysis method (RTA), Braun and Clarke (2013) allude to researchers writing their findings that thoroughly provide the necessary information to make sense of the data. Byrne (2021) argues the importance of ensuring items, such as scholarly citations, are included in the findings. He acknowledges how including such items goes against the academic norm for a dissertation study. The researcher continues to note how producing the findings section can be a "blurry" process due to the recursive nature of RTA; therefore, I will include citations within the upcoming paragraphs (Byrne, 2021, p. 1409). The findings of distinctions for each group are indicated below:

Cultural Narratives

Black Historical Narrative

> They had a Black narrative that was talked to them from their parents, and from the media outlets they subscribe to, and from their ignorance.
>
> –Clark Wayne, Study Participant

For Black Americans, a narrative informs many of the institutional barriers, cultural celebrations, emphasis on faith, and an overarching viewpoint within the community that has shaped the way Black males have navigated through the world and their educational careers.

There is a strong presence and increased understanding by most Americans of the long-lasting effects and current difficulties Black Americans still face due to systemic oppression.

Black Americans have been embroiled in a centuries-long struggle to attain equality, equity, and inclusion within a constitutional framework designed only to privilege White Americans, specifically White cis-gendered males. Within the education space, as discussed in Chapter II, deficit-oriented narratives about their levels of academic engagement and abilities stem from America's history of disenfranchising Black males. These harmful narratives still impact Black male collegians' ability to produce successful educational outcomes. The impact may come in the form of racial trauma that distracts from their ability to perform well academically.

Clark's quote further unpacks the harm of perpetuating deficit-oriented narratives from White students on his college campus: "They had a Black narrative that was spoken to them from their parents, and from the media outlets they subscribe to, and from their ignorance." He then stated, "They thought that when they saw me that I was on scholarship, that ... which I partially was on scholarship, but that was for academics." What was evident from analyzing the data was that Black males, such as Clark Wayne, could point to their long-standing history in America and a narrative that heavily informs his identity.

Black Lives Matter Movement

The Black Lives Matter Movement allows Black males to tap into a collective shared experience even if they are not directly involved. This movement discusses the implications of Anti-Blackness, and how there is a visceral experience from the killings of unarmed Black men and women. For the participants, the emotions felt by hearing about violent and discriminatory acts against the black community allow them to have discussions. Discriminatory acts committed

by those in the White community against Black individuals were illustrated in narratives such as Sully Woods, which will be discussed more in an upcoming paragraph. In other cases, like with Attys Yrrab, they saw how the effects of those who broke from the movement were not affiliated or merely took advantage of the moment to vandalize the local community.

Attys used this moment to help his community, fraught with trauma, pain, and tension, to demonstrate servant leadership and mentor others. During his interview, Attys stated:
I helped out a lot ... in my local area*... I forget the young man's name. The young man who was killed in the back of the van, and then the local* riots happened … a lot of us would go into the communities." He continued to note how he recalled serving his community: " go talk to the students at the schools; help do community cleanups after the riots, just kind of be that big brother for some of those kids out there because a lot of them don't have those figures."

Mistrust of Schools

> But there were also times that it felt that there was institutional racism, institutional barriers that were labeling students of color as different, as aggressive as not smart
>
> —Sully Woods, Study Participant

The majority of Black participants raised the issue of mistrust of schools. Sully Woods discussed an example of trying to stand up against discriminatory comments by a White peer only to be told by his dean that he "could have handled it better."

Systemic Issues. My view of mistrust was expanded upon by one of my data analysts, Eron Jenkins. As a school principal in Georgia and raised in the South, Mr. Jenkins spoke to some of the conditions in places such as Mississippi. He discussed the severe lack of funding and run-down schools to which Black students have access. Mr. Jenkins also conveyed the current segregation in K-12 Schools between White and Black children. Finally, he spoke about the lack

of Black students enrolled in local colleges in their backyard. I say all of the aforementioned to note that mistrust is not only in the form of individual educators but the system at large.

Why This Is Important. Black male collegians frequently encounter educators perpetuating harmful policies that negatively affect their academic outcomes. The educational system as a whole continues to fall behind in reviewing its protocols, like the college dean in Sully's narrative. When these policies, protocols, and lack of self-awareness from an educator's standpoint continue to have a harmful compounding effect that Black males deeply experience.

Latinx Narratives

Latinx Americans have less of a focus within American history textbooks. American students within the K-12 system have less exposure to influential Latinx community leaders and role models during class instruction. The historical relationship between the Latinx community, their civil rights, and access to various resources (e.g., education) has also been fraught with numerous obstacles for the community to surmount. The following sections highlight some of those challenges and ways the Latinx community continues to navigate the educational landscape.

Parental and Familial Immigration

My dad actually just got his citizenship not too long ago.

—Joe Rodriguez, Study Participant

Within the Latinx community, there are, on occasion, parental challenges with Immigration and navigating the U.S. higher education system. As evident through Joe Rodriguez and Lewis Fournier's narratives, Latinx males' parents migrating to the U.S. is present within this population. Although foreign-born parents exist within the Black community—Attys Yrrab, for example—this is less of a challenge than for Latinx males. Parents who migrated to the U.S.

have to re-establish themselves in the U.S., not only financially, but learn how to adapt to cultural differences. The impact on Latinx males is parents who often encourage their children to achieve high academic achievement but do not have the financial resources to invest in cost-prohibitive pre-collegiate experiences.

Concerning parental citizenship, although all the participants in this study, parents, and immediate family members are U.S. citizens, that is not the case for every Latinx student across America. Undocumented students are forced to figure out ways to financially afford their college degree even when a part of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals [DACA] program, which provides protections for this population (Contreras, 2009; Marrun, 2018; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Problems persist for students even if they are U.S. citizens because their parents may be undocumented.

Activism & Parental Ability to Assist in the Collegiate Process

> Where I come from, it's not the best school district.
>
> —Mike Brown, Study Participant

Activism for the Latinx community was fragmented in decades past. Students formed groups connected to their cultural and ancestral ties to Spanish-speaking countries. Rhoads (2016) discussed how in the 1960s, students were organizing to ardently speak against the untenable learning environments against the untenable conditions for Latinx students. The researcher noted that Latinx student advocacy groups expressed outrage at the lack of investment in physical resources. The students highlighted examples such as poorly maintained schools, lack of qualified teachers, and issues with courses taught by the Mexican Student Association in conjunction with Latinx groups (Rhoads, 2016).

Presently, Latinx students still have challenges within their schools. Participant Mike Brown stated the differing experiences of his White classmates in college: “The people I was in class with were from towns and cities that were predominately White, so it’s natural for towns like that to have … better books and stuff like that.” He also recounts the difficulties he encountered in high school concerning resources: “I’ve always seen that they always had brand new textbooks, the best textbooks if it just came out, and we always got the run down, been used for ten years, ripped textbooks.”

The lack of equity within educational experiences is not unique to Latinx students; however, it is compounded by their parent’s ability to support their academic endeavors. In some cases, the lack of parental mentorship in navigating the U.S. K-12 and higher education system leads the student to low levels of college preparedness. Participant Alex Ortiz discussed his parents’ educational past during his interview, citing—

> They immigrated to this country very early in their life, so didn’t have the opportunity to go to college. My mother had my older sister very early in her teenage years, so she wasn’t able to complete her high school education.

Another challenge for the Latinx community is how the conversation surrounding resources arguably does not provide the best forums for the Latinx community to express issues. Sundstrom (2008) argues: the racial construct of Black and White “does not engender accurate descriptions of the United States’ racial past or present, and it skews discussions of the future of race and racial justice toward the perspectives and interests of blacks and whites” (p. 66). Due to the history of slavery and racial injustice for the Black community, a spotlight is understandably on those specific issues. As the Latinx demographic increases within the higher education space, finding ways to continue uplifting this community’s voice to produce positive outcomes will be essential.

Barriers to Access

> The Department of Education tried to shut my school down twice.
>
> —Lewis Fournier, Study Participant

For Latinx students, underfunding K-12 school present a barrier to college entry. The excerpt above from Lewis Fournier underscores the realities of some school districts within the U.S. and the conditions in which these males are forced to learn. Lewis' narrative was filled with experiences of overcrowding, metal detectors, fights, and unsafe environments for learning overall. Other issues, such as a lack of access to technology and financial resources, make the dream of attending college far out of reach.

Why This Is Important. If a parent or family member is undocumented and the student may refrain from filing for any federal student loans, it may flag their family member and create fear of deportation (Abrego, 2019; Fix & Zimmerman, 2006).

Dr. Reiner, one of the data analysts, recalled a time that she academically advised a Latinx student who had an immediate family member that was undocumented. She spoke of the complications when attempting to provide support and resources to this individual. At one point, Dr. Reiner stated after exhausting all resources (and the student wanting to refrain from taking any actions that could potentially affect their family), all she could do was provide empathy and support. The gravity of the situation, however, did put undue mental stress and anguish on the student. Dr. Reiner reported that although the student was a consistent high-performer, it occasionally diverted mental focus and energy away from their studies. On a different note, listening to the needs of Latinx advocacy groups and students is a crucial step in assisting their success.

Language and Vernacular

Code-Switching in the Black Community

> Okay. So, I'm not going to change the way that I talk. I'm not going to change my quote-unquote accent.
>
> —Leroy Casanova, Study Participant

Leroy noted how others assumed where he was from based on what others perceived to be an accent:

> So, they already think that I have an accent. I don't know how. I don't think we're the South. I have family that's in the South, so I know the South. But in any case, they think that I have an accent. I know I don't have an accent. But to them, I have an accent.

Leroy ended this portion of the interview by explaining his view on others' judgment of his vernacular and how he chooses to address the issue:

> Okay. So, I'm not going to change the way that I talk. I'm not going to change my quote-unquote accent. Of course, I can't use slang in class or something like that. So, that's where I had to kind of refrain from, but I had to go back into my better choice of words instead of slang.

Why This Is Important

Findings from this study on code-switching are consistent with the literature that examines how Black males are frequently expected to code-switch or be looked down upon if they do not adhere to the unspoken expectations within educational settings (Harper & Davis III, 2012).

The Importance of Speaking Spanish in Latinx Communities

For some participants speaking Spanish was an integral part of their identity that they wanted to bring within them to their college experiences. Not being able to communicate in their second or, in some cases, their first language was frustrating.

Why This Is Important

The importance stems from institutions needing to focus on cultivating spaces where Spanish can be spoken frequently to further connect with the Latinx population.

Issues of Psychological Safety and Discrimination

Concerning psychological safety for all college students of color, their sense of psychological safety on campuses across the U.S. becomes heightened through strong bonds to their cultural roots and peers who are a part of their shared cultural background (McClain et al., 2016). The following sections explore how issues of discrimination affect each population.

Use of the N-Word Against Black Males

Upon reflecting with my dissertation chair on the "N-word" and it's explicit use, I was of two minds regarding the issue. The guidance I received was to not expressly state it, with which I do agree. It refrains from further causing harm toward the Black community specifically and others triggered by such offensive language. I briefly considered explicitly writing out the word after researching other scholars who selected to include it. I did not want to merely evoke the explicit use of the N-word for mere shock value. Spelling out the n-word, I believed, would have forced readers into the uncomfortable and unsettling place where members of the Black community find themselves, thus, highlighting and underscoring the severity of the issue. I ultimately chose not to spell out the N-word because I found that the benefits of including a racially charged word do not outweigh the harm. This dialogue surrounding how much power particular words or phrases hold toward marginalized communities, I believe, ties directly back to Black males and the discrimination they face on college campuses.

> I was at a party with some of our teammates, and one of my teammates called me the N-word.
>
> —Sully Woods, Study Participant

When moments like Sully just described occur for Black individuals, it can be an experience rattling them. The N-word has become a debated topic as it has entered into music and is considered by some in the Black community to be "reclaimed." Between both Black and Latinx groups, I did not find another word that was as powerful within the U.S. context that, if said aloud by some, could have the potential to create instant silence. I definitely do not want to give off the perception that no other deplorable words are used against other marginalized groups because those words exist. However, the N-word word is attached to the history of slavery and was used in during the murdering of Black slaves. So, in the context of our conversation about Black males in the U.S., I believe it holds considerable weight. Sully having to go through that racialized trauma was a horrible experience, to say the least. He did, however, continue to use these experiences to fight against the racial injustices on his college campus to great success.

Why This Is Important

In situations such as the one stated above, institutions need to be able to respond quickly to provide resources and support to the student and communities impacted most.

Discrimination in the Latinx Community

Unlike the N-Word, no abbreviated version can articulate the meanings of most of the discriminatory language used. I also believe it would do harm and add no value. Due to the increase in migration patterns and individuals seeking asylum, there has been an increase in hate speech. Some words describe migrants in despicable ways. This trend can impact U.S. Latinx college students who are merely stereotyped and demeaned. These types of hateful acts can

cause people to feel a lack of psychological safety and discourage those affected from being able to perform at their best.

Colorism and Physical Features within the Latinx Community

Within Latinx culture, there are issues of colorism. Yet, participants did not exhibit problems regarding colorism. Except for Mike Brown, Latinx participants did not report discrimination in the collegiate experiences. The presence of Black phenotypes in Latinx males can alienate other community members. Although Haywood (2017) supports these assertions of navigating issues of skin color, it is interesting to note that perhaps a more progressive lens is taking hold within Latinx student communities as more education about racism and self-identity is taking place.

Why This Is Important

Discussions around race and ethnicity in America currently can be a polarizing topic. Discussions about a person's racial and ethnic identity, if not carefully facilitated, can produce additional harm to the students involved. Educators taking the time to become well-versed in discussions around race and ethnicity is essential to have the tools needed to de-escalate and navigate these complex discussions.

Community, Culture, and Traditions

Culture and traditions encapsulate the essence of a vibrant community. This section explores how these aspects of the Black and Latinx community inform the lived experiences of Black and Latinx males. The following will present and discuss the themes above further.

Black Community, Culture, and Traditions

"I felt like I was at home." That previous excerpt was from participant Leroy Casanova, who noted his transfer from a PWI to an HBCU. Leroy stated his comfort in his HBCU being geographically close, thus evoking a sense of home and the feeling coming from the Black culture itself. I explicitly asked Leroy what experiences at the second institution impacted him academically. As he began to answer, he stopped himself, stating: "I was going to kind of go off track a little bit and say homecoming, but that didn't have anything to do with academically." However, the experience of attending the long-standing tradition of Homecoming, especially at an HBCU, is profoundly impactful. The event can create a sense of belonging, networking with peers, and seeing what he referred to as a "family-oriented" culture at work. Since the students were predominantly Black, he could engage with individuals who were directly from his community and, as he stated, "lean on each other."

Black Sub-Culture on College Campuses

When Leroy spoke about how the Black culture at his second institution differed from the Black sub-culture at his previous PWI, he discussed a few distinctions. Leroy highlighted the importance of being surrounded by the Black community's accent, slang, and overall warmth, making the HBCU a markedly different experience. Abdul discussed a Black fraternity at his PWI that had a significant impact on his college experience: "My biggest experiences throughout my undergraduate was . . . being with my fraternity . . . really just being involved with like-minded people within like the divine nine."Abdul described the divine nine and its longstanding history in the following statement: "The divine nine is a collection of Historically Black Fraternities and sororities that were founded in the early 1900s." The participant also

expressed how his fraternity allowed him to surround himself with similar drives: “having like a communal type of organization where everybody was kind of like focused on similar goals.”

Black Male College Transition

As illustrated in the narrative of Myers Lee and Clark Wayne, adjusting to college becomes a herculean effort. The adjustment issues are only exacerbated by a lack of available on-campus support systems if students feel as though they are experiencing some form of racial discrimination or culture shock. Black males should quickly get connected to Black spaces and other groups to feel a sense of belonging. The comradery with peers from their racial background is a contributing factor to overall achievement.

Why This Is Important. Having an accessible and thriving Black sub-culture—at any institution other than an HBCU—is instrumental in protecting Black males striving to be high academic performers. Goings and Bonner’s (2017) research points to having vibrant Black spaces on college campuses aiding in successful academic outcomes for Black males.

Latinx Sub-Culture on College Campuses

> There was an opportunity for you out there, and there were ways to make you feel at home.
>
> –Joe Rodriguez, Study Participant

Joe founded a Latinx fraternity on his college campus. When it came to creating a sub-culture on campus, Joe had the following to say:

> And I found my group of people on campus, and I was like, “Wow, this is where I feel way more comfortable.” Once I made that self-discovery, I was just like, “Wow, this is who I am.” I’m a straight-up, really Spanish kid on campus.

Connecting with others that embraced a significant aspect of who he is was a moment that created a lasting sense of belonging on campus for him.

Latinx Male College Transition

Within Andrew Smith's and Mike Brown's narratives, for example, they discussed how coming from K-12 schools in which they interacted with predominately Black and Latinx students. They cited how it was a major shift in attending a PWI and interacting primarily with White students until they found peers within their community. For Joe Rodriguez, he said he felt he was losing his connection to the Latinx community. As illustrated in the data, issues such as these shine a light on the need for intentional design around effectively transitioning this population to college life.

Why This Is Important. Educators need to learn how to identify when a student may be experiencing culture shock or in need of connecting to other students of color to ease any psychological distress. When a student is overly shy, non-expressive, or non-social, it can indicate a student needing assistance.

Family Dynamics

Black Family Dynamics

Support looks different within the Black household. Although there is just as much care, respect, and appreciation, Black males have more autonomy to break away from the central family unit. The exception is Attys as his family migrated to the U.S. Attys has general familial obligations and expectations that are more in line with the Latinx males. These expectations concern financial contributions to immediate and extended family members. The following excerpts demonstrate Chris's family's level of involvement during his grade school years:

> All my extra practice would be for my parents. It started off when I was in elementary school, having to come home and write in cursive. I had to show my parents. And if they approved of it, they approved. If they didn't, I had to redo it.

Attys discussed how family support looked like: “Family definitely helped guide it also because being the first person in my family, I’m the youngest of eight brothers, and my parents are fresh off the boat.” He ended by noting:

> …and how we got to where we are today and the work that we had to do, how this was not the norm. This is breaking the cycle. I wanted to break the cycle and give my family better opportunities.

Why This Is Important

Parental involvement aids Black males along their academic journeys. Parents who place high expectations on their children consistently expand their academic capabilities (Rhoden, 2017). Also, it is crucial to consider that when parents of Black males migrate to the U.S., the expectations placed on the student may be higher.

Latinx Family Dynamics

Mora Garibay (2020) analyzed the Latinx family dynamic and how students utilized them as a resource. Another study found that Latinx students drew strength from their families to attain their academic goals (Arbelo-Marrero & Milacci, 2016). There was a reoccurring theme of the students citing the extreme lengths their parents would go to ensure their well-being and support (Arbelo-Marrero & Milacci, 2016). Aside from immediate family, some students have relatives living in countries and territories they ethnically identify, which can create a different emphasis on educational and socio-economic aspirations. I want to highlight that this is not to say that Black Americans do not have family members abroad, such as Attys. However, supporting the extended family from a distance appears more prevalent within the Latinx culture.

Why This Is Important

Understanding that family is of high importance for some Latinx males is key to effective communication. Data Analyst, Malik Johnson, discussed his professional experiences as a staff member in higher education. He noted how Latinx families at his institution are actively engaged, whether on a moving day or to want to stay abreast of their child's academic performance resources.

Researcher Interpretations

In addition to what has been previously stated, my interpretation of their experiences is Collins' (1990, 2000) *Matrix of Domination and The Four Domains of Power Concerning Intersectionality* introduced in Chapter II. All the participants were affected by one of the four domains.

1. **Structural Domain.** Participants were affected by collusions of power within their college or university.
2. **Disciplinary Domain**. Participants experienced disproportionate policy enforcement, protocols, and encountering bureaucracy on campus (e.g., Sully Woods being told he was in the wrong and did not follow the correct process for speaking up to a team member who said an antisemitic comment. Another example is Trey Douglas who said his HBCU created a policy to close a student space early to prevent gay male students from "being left alone" with educators inappropriately, alluding to the fact they may engage in some sexual activity.
3. **Interpersonal Domain.** Participants with an additional marginalized identity, such as being in the LGBTQIA+ community, face discrimination from their racial group and

perpetrators failing to see the impact of their actions (e.g., other Black males discriminating against a gay Black male participant because of their gay identity).

4. **Hegemonic or Cultural Domain.** Black and Latinx students witnessing a singular narrative being pushed, specifically at PWIs, and disempowered through ignoring their racial or ethnic identities (e.g., a lack of culturally appropriate activities on campus for both populations or an unspoken expectation to speak or act in ways that align with the majority group on campus).

I considered the four domains when analyzing the data and understanding the narratives of all participants involved. *The Four Domains of Power Concerning Intersectionality* was selected because it not only took into account the males intersecting identities but the additional forces that produced tension and affected their reality. The Four Domains of Power aligns with my findings because they discuss how societal pressures affect marginalized people. Regardless of their conscious awareness, all participants had to navigate each of the four domains. One domain with particular impact was the structural domain, irrespective of the participant attending an HBCU, HSI, or PWI, because of how educators and leadership colluded to address situations, often in inappropriate ways. An example of the collusion of power within institutional leadership is some that were previously mentioned—policy changes that discriminate against gay males. Then the experience of educators who leveraged their authority to silence them speaking out against discrimination also fits into the disciplinary domain. Another example is Mike Brown, who raised concerns about the lack of racial and ethnic diversity within his school's nursing program. He cited how the process to gain acceptance into the program was inequitable and appeared to benefit his White peers, the dominant group in the program. I found that this model is still relevant today as it can be applied to all marginalized identities in relation to societal

forces. A *Technological Domain* is one addition to the model that I would argue is worth including. Upon examining data for participants attending college during COVID-19, there were unique challenges for some. Challenges ranged from a lack of access to adequate technology to a lack of consideration for intentional engagement with students of color in virtual spaces. As we move into even more technologically immersive environments, ensuring these spaces do not replicate the systemic barriers experienced in real life is crucial. Some may argue adding a *Technological Domain* may be unnecessary and could only require a revision to the langue within the *Structural Domain*. There are vast differences regarding how students interact in the real world versus virtual environments (e.g., dealing with physical boundaries vs. virtual ones), so I contend it is vital to make the distinction.

Participants in the study were constantly pushed against institutional racism through antiquated approaches when dealing with various forms of discrimination. I noted Black participants, particularly those practicing positive racial socialization—previously discussed in Chapter II. For Latinx male participants who spoke Spanish, their identity appeared to be deeply tied to their language. They felt stifled by being unable to express a full array of emotions because they had to repress a large part of their identity. Participants vividly remembered experiences where they had a visceral reaction to specific experiences within their college environment. Leroy Casanova and Joe Rodriguez both used the phrase “feeling like home” to describe when they were in their respective cultural groups. I believe the sense of psychological safety and ability to be their authentic self without fear of some discriminatory act fed into that “homey” feeling. The distinction in how they identity what home feels like is within their respective sub-cultures. Being surrounded by the music, dance, and food from their specific cultural groups made their narratives come alive and project a sense of excitement.

Black participants took great pride in sharing their experiences of being involved in Black lead groups and spaces. The Black community appeared to serve as an anchor to their collegiate experiences. The community was able to ground them when they went through academic challenges, racialized experiences, or personal setbacks. Latinx males were more prone to take decisive action and expeditiously created or sought out spaces where they were acknowledged for their cultural identity.

Embodied Salient Identities

As I continued to pore through the data, something kept capturing my attention. There were moments in every participant's narrative that not only had them selecting to embrace one of their salient identities at the moment, but they embodied entirely not only the psychological characteristics but physical characteristics as well.

Definition

I define embodied salient identities as an individual's ability to not only activate one of their salient identities on the identity continuum but to fully utilize their physicality (tone of voice, height, etc.) and consciously or unconsciously activate other bodily processes, such as tightening muscles by working out or automatically experiencing increased heart rate due to stress.

One participant, Attys Yrrab, discussed getting into a car accident during his interview. The interesting and unexpected thing from his complete response was how the accident impacted his academic work. Attys brushed off the experience and almost did not bring up this event. He nonchalantly expressed that as an athlete, he encounters many moments that test his physical endurance. So, he noted that although he felt the pain, Attys said: "Yeah. I'm a football guy, so those little things, I'm just like, "All right, I'm good." I brush it off." I then asked if he

experienced any pain that was significant enough to impact his academic work, and he stated: "academically, no. I'm able to separate certain things."

When I probed further about how he compartmentalized certain things, he responded: "I guess just through experiences. Like I was saying, I was a football guy, so I would go to class, or I would go to ... Even with track, you would go to classes banged up, limping." Attys noted: "I even had surgery my senior year, and I was still going to class the day after surgery." Although the other participants' stories did not have a similar example to that degree, I began reviewing other challenging moments in each of the Black and Latinx males' narratives. For participants, although some experiences were more difficult to navigate than others, they all appeared to embrace a specific identity to persist. Participants embraced an identity they strongly identify with to maneuver their current circumstances successfully. Attys' case went further because he seemingly transferred his ability to deal with high physical pain to his academic work to achieve his educational goals.

I began to dig deeper and review other participant transcripts. Nathaniel Cooper, for example, discussed addressing challenges of depression during COVID-19; he discussed having a specific "mindset" that his friends had of "no bullshit." Nathaniel noted that although his friends were supportive, they still expected him to attend class. So, he embraced this "no bullshit" mentality to push past his mental health challenges. Beyond COVID-19, Nathaniel spoke to his philosophy in addressing general obstacles. He shared how his peers continue to hold the same perspective: "…some of them are from low-income families. And like it's just when I see them, like, succeed, it's like alright … There's still shit you gotta get done." When reviewing this with one of my data analysts, Isiah Jackson, he noted that many Black males are in "survival mode." Mr. Jackson explained how their physical and psychological attributes could

be defined through a person's perceived threat or danger of not securing necessities like money, food, shelter, and safety. He also stated how physical aspects such as squaring their shoulders, increased heart rate, and muscle tension might occur based on the presenting situation.

The insights into how participants embody their most salient identity fit the context of Sully Woods and Steve Hamlet. Sully and Steve addressed their respective challenges through a high level of emotional intelligence and utilization of their personal and surrounding resources. Sully, even when retelling his story, embodied a more assertive and passionate tone when discussing how he approached educating others in response to facing discrimination. It appeared that advocacy was his way of coping with the racial trauma in his collegiate environment. As for Steve, he seemed to disengage from any negative thoughts of his unique circumstance and instead refocused on embodying his leadership identity that is biased toward action to get his coursework completed and find a house.

Chapter Summary

The compiled data included:

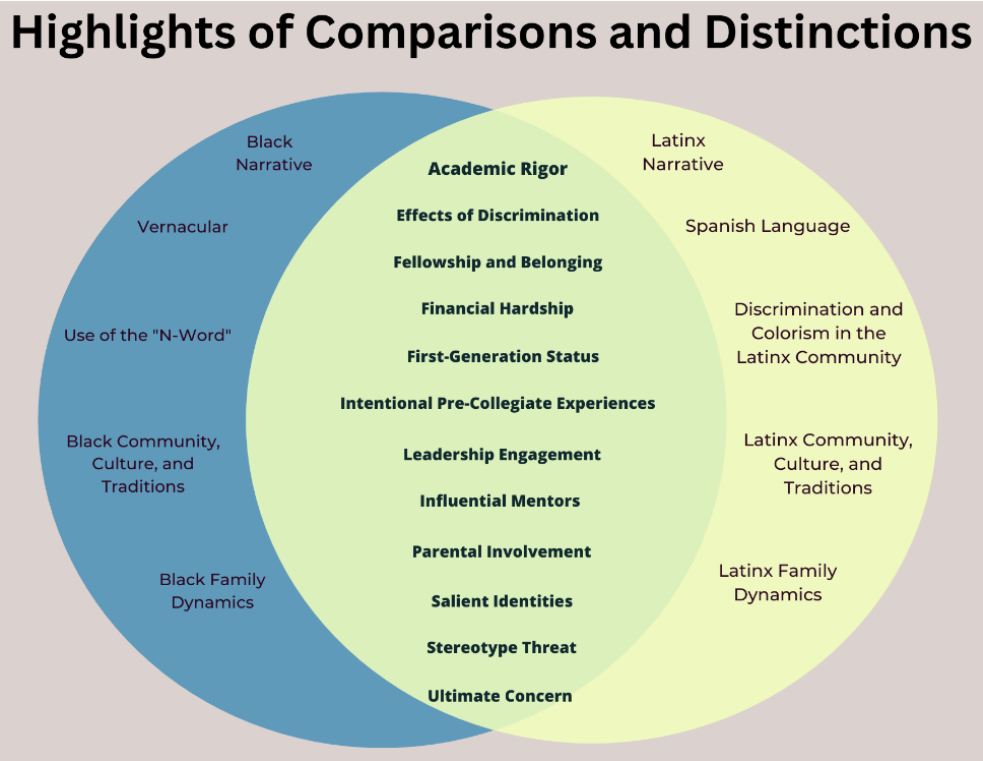
- Over (20) hours of recorded Zoom interviews
- Approximately (900) pages of transcripts
- Approximately (170) pages of field notes
- Approximately (20) hours of engagement with my Code Reviewer and Data Analysts

After personally analyzing the data and engaging in over 10 hours of discussions with the main Code Reviewer and 13 additional Data Analysts over eight months, it resulted in personally constructing five main themes with a total of sixteen sub-themes. Through examples and

participant excerpts, I also began to illustrate how some commonalities and points of distinction exist between the two populations. Figure 4.8 provides an example.

Figure 4.8

Highlights of Commonalities and Points of Distinction



Aside from identifying the commonalities and distinctions, the data was rich with timely examples of the successes and failures that Black and Latinx face in today's higher education system. Then, I revealed how different interactions throughout their educational experiences, especially within their college environments, led to their academic success. In Chapter V, discuss and further unpack how themes, commonalities, and points of distinction are essential in providing a deeper understanding of supporting these populations. In the next chapter, I will present my ideas for future research and implications for educational practice. By focusing on salient identities and past lived experiences, I will propose that educators can help Black and Latinx male collegians produce successful outcomes. Educators can support these populations by

exploring the males' concept of self and the salient identities they choose to embody, leading to higher degrees of academic success.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Research Question

Chapter I introduced the reader to this study's purpose, relevance, significance, and research question. This dissertation study sought to ask one significant question: What experiences make Black and Latinx male collegians academically successful? I also asked the sub-question: What are the commonalities and distinctions between each group?

Research Aims

My intention in conducting this research was to produce culturally responsive recommendations that support educators in guiding both participant groups to high academic achievement.

Significance and Relevance

Based on today's social climate within the U.S. and the inequities spotlighted, this research is timely and significant in supporting two populations that have not been adequately invested in the U.S. higher education system.

Review of the Literature

Chapter II reviewed the existing landscape of scholarly research on Black and Latinx males. The chapter also presented Harper's (2012) Anti-Deficit Framework that reframes deficit-oriented questions regarding academic achievement for males of color. Although there has been an abundance of literature exploring this topic, I selected a different approach to produce rich data that contributed something new to the field.

Methodology and Data Analysis

Chapter III discussed the study design. Through my methodology, Narrative Inquiry, and data analysis tool, Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), I constructed five overarching themes and several

sub-themes pointing to success factors. Due to the reflexive nature of my analysis, I relied heavily on participants' narratives, my positionality, which includes my past work within higher education, and assistance from several researchers that expanded my understanding of the data. RTA, the data analysis I used to produce my findings, strictly adhered to Braun and Clarke's (2020) rigorous and transparent six-stage process.

Participants and Methods

Over approximately six months, I performed a study that included: (a) conducting 20 recorded individual interviews—10 Black and 10 Latinx male college graduates; (b) cleaning and reviewing transcripts, interview recordings, and constructing themes; (c) engaging in discussions with my code reviewer and several data analysts to help unpack the data; and (d) writing the final research findings. All the participants graduated from a 4-year institution in the U.S. with a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher.

Key Findings

Chapter IV reviewed the findings of the study. Some experiences overlapped and were essential for Black and Latinx male collegians to succeed academically. Yet, one vital element contributing added texture to the existing literature was noting their cultural distinctions and embodied salient identities to aid in high academic performance.

In this Chapter, I will discuss the following:

- Summary of Findings: Distinctions for Black and Latinx Males
- Connection to Existing Literature
- Advancements in the Conversation Surrounding Black and Latinx Male Collegians
- Limitations of the Study

- Implications for Educational Practice
- Areas for Future Research
- Personal Reflections
- Conclusion

Summary of Findings: Distinctions for Black and Latinx Males

The cultural distinctions between Black and Latinx male collegians were historical narratives, the importance of language for Latinx males and the importance of vernacular for Black males, family dynamics, issues surrounding psychological safety and discrimination, challenges of citizenship for Latinx males, cultures and traditions, and racial and ethnic identities, and intergenerational narratives. Upon further analysis, I found that each of the males would embody as the specific salient identity of theirs to surmount various obstacles that would interfere with academic success. The embodiment of a particular identity, community leader, for example, would lead to physical changes in vocal intonation, level of energy, and an increase in pain tolerance in at least one case. The embodiment of one of their salient identities enables them to successfully re-orient themselves, physically and psychologically, to meet the demands of a given circumstance.

Connection to the Existing Literature

Throughout the second half of the study (data review, construction of themes, and analysis), I found multiple connections between the literature reviewed in Chapter II and my findings. The following sections examine each main theme and discuss the sub-themes linked to the findings:

Connections to Salient Identities and the Implications of the Self and Others

Research that touched on aspects concerning the self, such as beliefs and habits, was present in this study's findings.

Identity Continuum

Deci and Ryan's (2000) discussion on integrated regulation (a student's merging an action or habit with their core belief) partly informed my construction of the term "embodied salient identities." Crenshaw's (1989) work on intersectionality, paired with the topics' continued examination by researchers (Collins, 2009; Fotopoulou, 2012), also contributed to my understanding of how the participants shared their experiences. Trey Douglas, for example, navigated his intersecting identities of being a male, Black, high-performing scholar, and gay at an HBCU. The varying facets of participants' identities helped me to understand how they all activate and utilize these identities depending on the context. His identities and environment —at the macro and micro-level—were palpable and sometimes felt "violent," according to Trey (Collins, 2009).

Haywood (2017) correctly observed the importance of being "seen" by others for Latinx students. Past literature has also stressed the importance of cross-racial interactions for Black students.

Experiences of Othering. I found through the data (e.g., Mike Brown discussing his exclusion from his White peers) that it also extends to Latinx males (Strayhorn, 2014).

Stereotype Threat. Numerous scholars have revealed how stereotype threat disrupts a student's ability to thrive academically (Aronson et al., 2002; Guyll et al., 2010; Taylor & Walton, 2011; Turochy et al., 2021). Chris Jackson discussed his goal of showing peers the full extent of his academic prowess as one of the only Black men in one of his college courses.

Connections to Navigating the Master Narrative

The concept of the master narrative discussed by researchers (Collins, 2000; Syed et al., 2015; Takaki, 2006) notes the Eurocentric and White American story that dominates our society (Syed et al., 2015). Collins (2000) expounded upon the topic of the master narrative by acknowledging how people of color need to assimilate and operate within White power structures. Within one of the main themes, *Navigating the Master Narrative,* the three sub-themes listed below were all addressed within the research. The following sub-themes discuss their connection to the existing body of literature.

Importance of Language and Vernacular

Researchers (Bigaouette, 2019; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007) discussed the unique styles of each group's language and vernacular. Latinx participants who spoke Spanish, i.e., Andrew Smith and Lewis Fournier, found it essential to connect with peers within the ethnic group who shared their cultural identity. Black male participants, such as Leroy Casanova and Sully Woods, highlighted issues such as code-switching, authentic voice, and the unspoken expectation of "academic tone" in settings including White academic environments.

Creating and Engaging in Spaces of Fellowship and Belonging

Prior literature linked to the sub-theme of *Creating and Engaging in Spaces of Fellowship and Belonging* was researchers Calderón (2018) and Fischer (2007). In his research, Calderón (2018) emphasized how essential a sense of belonging is for students of color. Literature that focused on extracurricular activities and feeling a sense of belonging (Fischer, 2007) was evident in most participant narratives, including Andrew Smith, Nathaniel Cooper, Abdul Hassan, and Steve Hamlet, to name a few). The idea of cultural programming contributing to a sense of belonging (Garcia Reyes, 2021) was confirmed by narratives such as Alex Ortiz.

Alex cited several extracurricular Latinx cultural programs involving dance, food, and games (i.e., Loteria "Bingo" Night) that created a sense of community amongst Latinx peers.

Experiencing Moments of Discrimination and Racialized Trauma

Researchers Carter Andrews (2012), Ford et al. (2008), and Fries-Britt and Griffin (2007) underscored the problematic nature of predominately White spaces that ineffectively addressed discrimination issues on college campuses. Sully Wood's experience as a Black man defending a Jewish student against discrimination from a college teammate connects back to literature. Scholarly literature has discussed the harmful impact on a student of color's academic success due to feeling unsupported by White educators and peers at PWIs (Carter Andrews, 2012; Ford et al., 2008). Sully noted his college dean as saying he was "inappropriately handling the situation" and telling Sully that he "shouldn't have spoken up to the student." He then stated: "it felt that there was institutional racism, institutional barriers that were labeling students of color as different, as aggressive as not smart." Bonilla-Silva (2014) asserted that those who participate in systems that strip away others' racial and cultural identity by ignoring the damaging effects—in this case, the dean from the excerpt above—only serve to perpetuate the harmful impact on marginalized communities.

Connections to Significant Interpersonal Interactions

Mentors (Intentional or Unintentional) and Experiencing Displays of Warmth and Authenticity

Most participants spoke to faculty and staff mentors with whom they created strong bonds. They provided examples in their interviews that revealed the various displays of warmth and support they received. Participants cited examples of educators being approachable, listening during turbulent times, and going above the responsibilities of their roles. These educators

frequently provided academic, emotional, and, at times, financial support through departmental funds for co-curricular experiences. One example of an educator's high degree of support was Joe Rodriguez's trip to Greece and the programming funds from an on-campus staff member's program budget. This act of support was especially noteworthy since the participant was not in the staff member's student program. The educator, nevertheless, financially contributed, and students knew them for going the extra mile. The scholarship supports these findings by asserting educator and student relationships contribute to academic success (Adelman, 2006; Astin, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991; Martinez & Klopott, 2005; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993).

Connections to Catalysts for Academic Success

Parental Involvement

My findings supported prior research stating the significance of parental involvement in their child's academic career to guide and make college seem like the next logical step in their educational journey (Gándara & Moreno, 2002; Lareau, 1987, 2000; McDonough, 1997; Perna & Titus, 2005). In Leroy Cassanova's interview, when asked if his parents encouraged attending college, he said: "Oh, I was going to college since elementary school. I mean, that was kind of a non-negotiable, really." Additional past scholarship (Lee, 1993; Muller, 1993; Zick et al., 2001) underscored that parents' involvement in academics and students' college preparedness are closely linked. An example of the link is from Chris Jackson's interview, where he revealed how his parents were highly involved during his grade school years: "I didn't take any extra prep courses on the weekends or after class. All my extra practice would be for my parents." Chris then discussed his parents' expectations when providing extra academic support at home: "Had to show my parents. And if they approved of it, they approved. If they didn't, I had to redo it."

Participants who had a lesser degree of parental involvement, such as Lewis Fournier, had to identify how to navigate his college career independently.

Academic Rigor and Intentional Pre-College Interactions and Experiences

All participants had varying degrees of pre-collegiate experiences that either helped or hindered positive educational outcomes. Eldrick Bryant, Steve Hamlet, Myers Lee, and Daniel Vasquez, for example, all participated in highly stimulating pre-college programs that introduced them to: rigorous coursework through their high school teacher. Some participants also had the opportunity to attend external programs with external mentors, college major-specific projects, and internships assisting with their academic aspirations and personal development. Johnson (2019) supports past findings by noting how pre-collegiate experiences are advantageous to successful future academic results. Prior research further enforces the notion regarding the experiences above by specifically citing aspects such as challenging classwork, engaging assignments, and high academic expectations (Adelman, 1999, 2006; Arbona & Nora, 2007; Cabrera et al., 2005; DesJardins et al., 2002; Ishitani, 2006; Nora et al., 2005).

Other participants, however, i.e., Lewis Fournier, discussed the challenging high school environment that made it more difficult to receive the information he needed to thrive academically in college. He thankfully had one teacher who encouraged attending college because he demonstrated a more academic commitment than his high school peers. Mike Brown also maneuvered an underfunded high school. In his interview, he stated,

> where I come from is not the best school district. The people that I was in the class with were from towns and cities that were predominantly white, so it's natural for towns like [these]…to have better school systems and better opportunities, better textbooks.

Mike concluded his thought by stating: "we've always seen that they always had brand new textbooks, the best textbooks if it just came out, and we always got the rundown, been used

for ten years, ripped textbooks." I found in reviewing the data that the literature and my findings aligned concerning participants from supportive K-12 environments and those who were not. The participants with positive pre-collegiate experiences better navigated their college coursework with more skills, foundational knowledge of the rigors of college, and the ability to pivot if encountering a problem quickly. Myers Lee, for example, when he academically underperformed in his first year of college, quickly drew upon his prior positive pre-college experiences to succeed.

Summary

The findings mostly aligned with the existing scholarly research on Black and Latinx male academic success, as noted throughout Chapter IV. Scholarship on emotional intelligence was linked to an increase in positive outcomes for surmounting obstacles was reiterated within my findings (Adeyemo, 2007; Barchard, 2003; Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Gil-Olarte et al., 2006; Lam & Kirby, 2002; Song et al., 2010; Tapia & Marsh, 2006). My findings also aligned with the following scholars who discussed the connection between students having a sense of belonging and academic success (Calderón, 2018; Fisher, 2007; Garcia Reyes, 2021; Haywood, 2017; Strayhorn, 2014). Regarding parental involvement, Black and Latinx male collegians' narratives also confirmed findings from researchers citing a connection to positive educational outcomes (Gándara & Moreno, 2002; Lareau, 1987, 2000; McDonough, 1997; Perna & Titus, 2005).

Advancements in the Conversation Surrounding Black and Latinx Male Collegians

This study has provided various new avenues to explore deeply: the successful academic engagement of Black and Latinx male collegians in the context of their salient identities. This study specifically gave a brief insight into both populations in the wake of major national and global events—the Black Lives Matter Movement and the COVID-19 pandemic. Black and

Latinx male collegians that embody their salient identities is an avenue that can be examined further when attempting to cultivate a new scholarly identity within a collegiate environment in a culturally responsive fashion. Being aware of the students' racial and ethnic identity is still a critical part of addressing their complete sense of self; however, that should be positioned in the foreground while their salient identities are put into sharp focus.

Limitations of Research Design

The limitations of my research design come from my use of RTA. Clarke and Braun (2013) argued that Thematic Analysis or TA (a term that encompasses the various types of TA) is not highly regarded in the academic community due to its flexible approach. TA has also had issues with researchers not correctly implementing the technique and mislabeling TA for another kind of analytic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Another piece I view as a strength of RTA that some may critique is how this approach relies on my thoughts and meaning-making around the themes. I have attempted to counteract the misuse issue by intentionally following the six steps Braun and Clark (2006, 2020) laid out to ensure the effective use of RTA and my use of a code reviewer. Another limitation of this study is the inability to generalize from a small sample of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Implications for Educational Practice

Upon reviewing the findings and existing literature, my thoughts align with Howard's (2013) original assertion that different frameworks, models, and tools are not a "panacea" to the systemic issues in education (p. 65). Institutional barriers erected over generations will take the following: collective conscious reflection, creating an overarching mission and vision for the institution, a multi-pronged strategic plan, and a target investment of physical, financial, and Human Resources. I believe an interdisciplinary approach that deals with the various political,

racial, ethnic, and cultural challenges, to name a few, is necessary. Below are two recommendations: (a) brief macro-level recommendations—institutional level and (b) micro-level—educator and student-specific recommendations.

Recommendations

Before moving forward, it is important to note that if institutional leadership does not deeply engage with the process, it may not produce meaningful or significantly impactful outcomes. There is a stark contrast between filling a check box and thoroughly engaging in this work in an empathic way. Fully engaging with this work means a dedication of personal and institutional resources for creating an inclusive and culturally responsive campus culture. Below are recommendations for creating institutional changes on a macro level to address institutional barriers that interfere with the academic performance of Black and Latinx male collegians.

These recommendations are birthed from the specific ways the Black and Latinx participants felt empowered through mentorship, community outreach, visible and action-oriented institutional leaders, and campuses that demonstrated a sense of warmth, inclusion, and sensitivity toward marginalized populations. These recommendations are also informed by what the participants viewed as problematic. Issues include a lack of cultural understanding from educators, peers, and institutional cultures that were not inclusive or reflective of their cultural backgrounds. When I continued to reflect on participant narratives, I concluded that institutional leadership—boards of trustees, presidents, and their executive leadership teams—must consciously reflect on the present situation concerning DEI initiatives. Conscious reflection would examine exisiting institutional policies and procedures that harm Black and Latinx male collegians. Thinking through policies and procedures that harm these

populations is the beginning phase of addressing barriers to Black and Latinx male collegians on a macro-level.

Next, institutional leadership will then be tasked with identifying the areas that would provide the most impact for both populations. A frequent concern amongst post-secondary institutions, especially small-private schools, is balancing the need to maintain and increase student enrollment while financing critical DEI initiatives. Conducting an internal review of the current institutional pain points concerning DEI efforts and proposed changes is time-consuming. Yet, an internal review of systems perpetuating inequity is paramount to inclusion efforts. The first logical and cost-effective step would be to enact an interim solution. While conducting a more intensive review with campus stakeholders, an interim solution would be creating a pilot program. Kezar and Eckel (2007), as mentioned in Chapter II, discuss the importance of focus groups and surveys when understanding the current state of DEI efforts within an institution. The researchers also emphasize having a participatory process. My next set of recommendations to post-secondary leadership concerning intermediate to long-term solutions is the following:

5. ***Engage in the Process of Critical Consciousness.*** Institutional leaders gain the appropriate DEI lectures and facilitators to understand their worldviews and how they tie into societal forces (Freire, 2005).
6. ***Conscious Reflection.*** The college or university leadership reflects on the current climate of the institution, its systems, processes, and philosophy of addressing issues, particularly with Black and Latinx male students.

2. ***Become Consciously Aware.*** Educators begin to learn how they and minoritized students deal with the tensions between their identity and institutional forces. They also learn how to unpack various emotions tied to DEI topics and address them

healthily and effectively for themselves and the students (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Luft, 2010; Person et al., 2017).

3. ***Enact a Participatory Process.*** Create forums for the campus community to discuss DEI issues. Next, conduct focus groups for Black and Latinx students to further understand their experiences on campus and survey the campus community to field questions on how DEI efforts can be improved (Kezar & Eckel, 2007).
4. ***Review and Plan.*** Review all the data collected and plan with post-secondary leadership on the most appropriate methods to disseminate the findings, include the campus community in the change process, and execute expeditiously.

Ahmed (2012) discussed institutions engaging in a "performance culture," which can be equated to "theatrics" (p. 85). Colleges and university leaders should be mindful of producing vanity metrics that only show improvement for DEI within data. Leaders should continue to engage in an ongoing dialogue with Black and Latinx males to ensure that students are feeling and experiencing the positive impacts of any DEI initiatives.

With this next set of macro-level recommendations, I aim to provide institutional leaders with practical remedies. The intent is to at least triage and provides targeted relief to these minoritized students. Simultaneously, institutions should continue to engage in the intentional process of reflection, review, engaging with campus stakeholders, etc., to enact lasting change. The following would be how a college or university can restructure existing programs to provide a timely response to supporting Black and Latinx Students: (a) college or university leadership can examine developing a pilot program to support both populations academically, (b) allocate training and professional development funds toward providing training in cultural responsiveness and specifically understanding more about Black and Latinx male collegians, (c) hold intentional

conversations with directors of programs focusing on supporting the success of racial and ethnically underrepresented populations to see what challenges they encounter and resources they need, (d) continue to include directors and bring in their staffs, and any faculty to collaborate on further planning and execution of (e) post-secondary leaders should focus on using time and intention as a resource. Utilizing time as a resource would include engaging in conversations early, providing at least ten months to one year for directors and staff to prepare and implement changes, and reprioritizing existing tasks and goals for staff and faculty so they can produce a successful outcome. Since participants discussed programs focused on minoritized populations, these would be a good starting point.

Narrative-Driven Educational Practice

Defining Narrative-Driven Educational Practice

Narrative-Driven Educational Practice [NDEP] is a student-centered approach that helps re-center Black and Latinx students in their collegiate experience. NDEP equips educators with a culturally responsive way to co-create a collegiate scholarly identity while guiding students in envisioning and attaining personal, academic, and future career goals. This practice emphasizes the following:

1. **Identifies Salient Identities.** Through actively listening to students' lived experiences, educators identify their salient identities (e.g., racial, ethnic, religious, and scholarly identities).
2. **Discovers Past and Present Experiences**. Educators take time to discover students' past and present lived experiences.
3. **Facilitates the Process of Envisioning Goal Attainment**. The educator then uses the knowledge of the students' lived experiences to assist the student with the facilitation

of generating potential outcomes. Then work with the student to co-create a future road map aligned with their personal, academic, and career goals.

4. **Acknowledges Yet Not Assumes Based on Race and Ethnicity.** NDEP asks educators to recognize and acknowledge the students' racial and ethnic identities (understanding how different aspects of their experiences are affected by those backgrounds) while keeping those identities in the foreground while learning what identities speak to the learner the most. This approach strongly recommends educators check in with themselves and reflect on any biases that may harm the students psychologically.

Philosophy of Narrative Educational Practice

When employing NEPD, educators need to understand the philosophy of this approach. NEPD applies a culturally responsive lens empowering educators in the ongoing facilitation of an intentional practice that aids in forming students' collegiate scholarly identity. This approach considers how societal and institutional systems negatively impact, frequently silence, and impede the growth of Black and Latinx males. Thus, NEPD attempts to create a space to explore the full breadth of their intellectual abilities, talents, and aspirations frequently stifled within the milieu of post-secondary education.

Drawing from existing approaches and theories such as: narrative therapy, strength-based, embodied leadership, and intersectionality, it situates Black and Latinx males in the center of their college experience rather than feeling like an observer. Through the students answering questions geared at: (a) reflecting on their lived experiences, (b) multiple identities, (c) intersections of those identities, and (d) how their identities are impacted by their environments, it will begin Black and Latinx male collegians on the path toward crafting their future goals.

Creating and promoting immersive experiences that are highly engaging, insightful, and rigorous allows Black and Latinx males to learn how to navigate experiences inside and outside collegiate bounds effectively. NEPD empowers the student through exploring, discovering, and introducing experiences and opportunities that allow for the anchored foundation of their scholarly identity on which it is built. The NEPD approach sees the budding scholars as authors writing a fluid narrative that may change due to varying circumstances and personal growth. It is also a narrative rooted in an understanding of needing to demonstrate a bias toward action concerning their ultimate goals.

By educators identifying their strengths and areas of development through the students' past and present experiences, they can provide targeted feedback on progress on goal attainment. In employing this approach, the educator embraces quality interactions (those that can acknowledge, teach, challenge, or facilitate connection), and outreach is a requisite for favorable results. NEPD seeks to help the learner recognize and gain the language necessary to name and express feelings surrounding various forms of discrimination. The approach directs Black and Latinx males to identify institutional and societal barriers that impact their academic success and create psychological harm. They learn to navigate issues favorably. Figure 5.1 reveals the 7 Guiding Principles I constructed based on study data to help educators academically support both populations.

Figure 5.1

The 7 Guiding Principles of Narrative-Driven Educational Practice

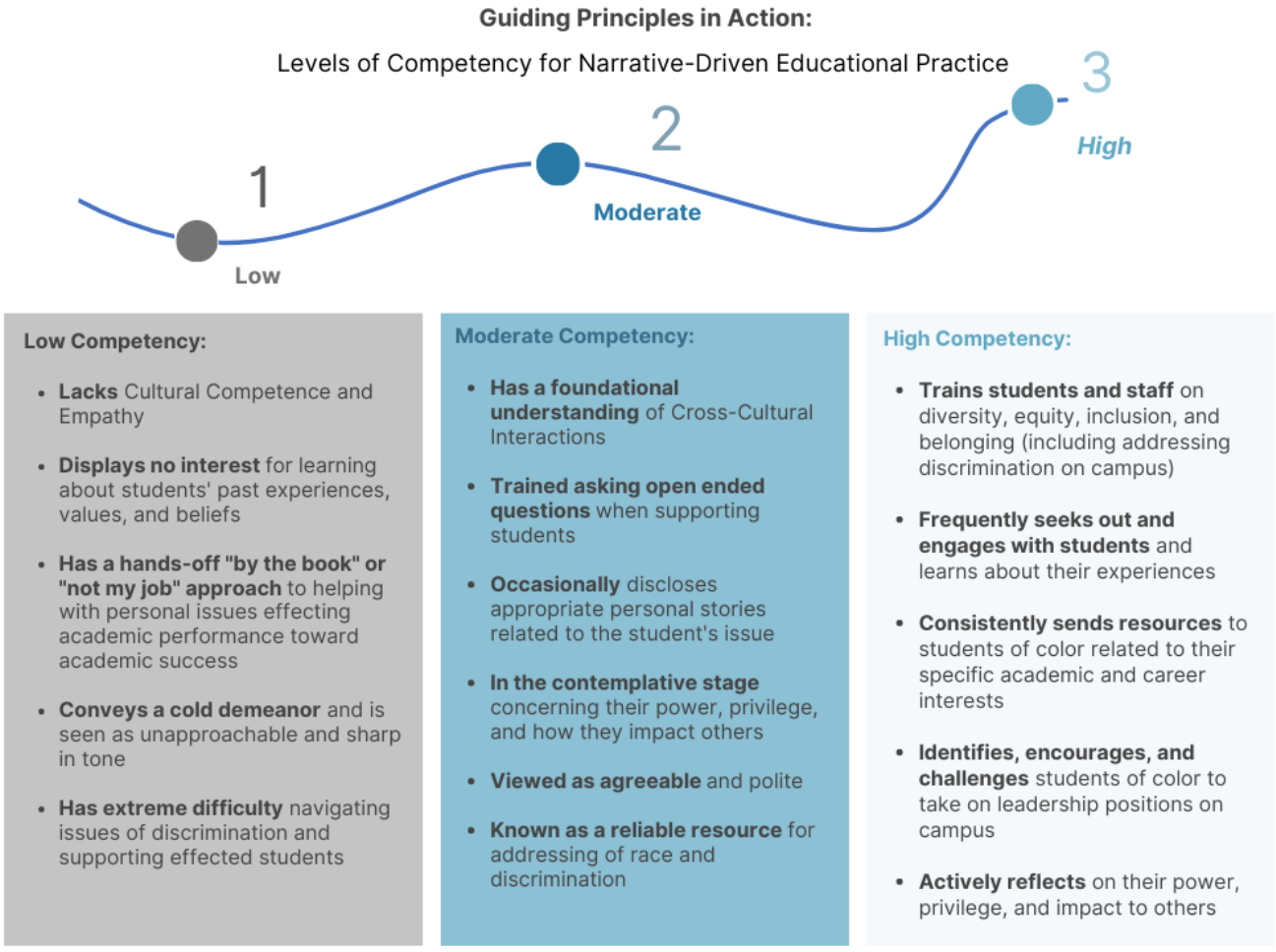
Phases	Core Values	Guiding Principles	Description	Connection to Participant Narratives	Connection to Literature
1	Reflect	**Critically Reflect on Your Identities, Privileges, and Pedagogy**	Educators' ability to critically ***reflect*** on their identities, privileges, and pedagogy before guiding students is a vital first step. Taking time to reflect on how one's worldview and lived experiences shape interactions with students is essential to intentionally co-create with the student a plan to produce successful outcomes. Critical Reflection also allows the educator to plan intentionally on building rapport with the student.	The guiding principle of reflection is created based on the participant's negative experience with an educator. The educator's lack of self-awareness and cultural competency was evident from the retelling of the incident. Sully Woods recounted his negative experience with a fellow student committing a bias-related incident and how the college's dean inappropriately handled the matter: *"I was brought into the dean's office and told that I in appropriately handled the situation that I shouldn't have spoken up to the student."*	The existing literature has discussed the challenges surrounding the process of critically thinking through the impact White Institutional systems and processes have on students of color in collegiate environments (C. Byrd et al., 2019). It would behoove educators to engage in conversations concerning White institutional power and the impact on students of color (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Luft, 2010).
2	Listen	**Listen to Student's Past Academic and Personal Narratives**	Students arrive in collegiate settings with an extensive personal history (both in and out of the classroom) that profoundly informs their interactions with coursework and ability to perform. Educators' willingness to actively ***listen*** and learn about aspects such as: past academic successes, failures, obstacles, academic habits, and views on their scholarly identity can produce a wealth of information. Listening also continues the process of forming significant and meaningful student-educator bond.	Myers Lee discussed his experience with a professor who was a trusted confidant: *"With one of the faculty members*, she just made me feel very comfortable when I first started there. She showed me that I could talk to her about what I was going through there, and then she gave me insight."* He went on to underscore the strong rapport built by describing the professor as "motherly": *"Because she had been there so long and she had worked with so many students and she was a parent herself, so she had that motherly feel, I guess, or that person that you respect and you respect your opinion, and somebody that you can confide and everything like that. She really provided that for me when I went up there....."*	When adequate time and relational investment are directed toward students from faculty, it was found that students thrive academically (Harrison, 2014). Prior researchers (Astin, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993) found significant evidence that bonds created with students have a notable impact on their academic success.
3	Discover	**Discover Student's Salient Identities and Personal Values**	Identifying the salient identities of a student can help the educator understand the various facets of their identity. Educators can then ***discover*** how they utilize those identities to navigate different environments and attain academic success.	For participant Mike Brown, one of his salient identities is being a grandson and caring for his ailing grandmother during college: *"For me personally, sometimes when I had her class, it would be hard to study or hard to complete an assignment on time because I have a grandma who has *health problems...."* Mike ended by stating: *"So, taking care of her would sometimes interfere. It's not like I didn't want to do the assignments or study, but to me, my family comes first."*	The unique experiences Black and Latinx males encounter due to their intersecting identities are essential for educators to learn and unpack to support them in their development Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Luft, 2010).

Phases	Core Values	Guiding Principles	Description	Connection to Participant Narratives	Connection to Literature
4	Engage	**Authentically Engage in Open Communication and Discussing Your Narrative**	Educators deciding to ***engage*** with a student authentically allows for a sense of trust to be formed. Openly sharing appropriate stories from one's past teaches the students lessons and projects a sense of transparency and approachability.	Joe Rodriguez divulged during his interview the level of trust he had with a staff member on his college campus: *"And it sounds crazy, but it matters mentally; good communication with an advisor or a faculty on campus matters to he was trustworthy. You tell this guy anything; he wasn't really going to spill the beans about anything...."* He concluded by noting the staff member's authenticity: *"... he was a very loving guy...you just wanted to be around because he made you laugh, he was hilarious guy not a superficial guy he was just real.*	The student-faculty dynamic has been shown in the literature to have a positive impact on the student's academic career and spark feelings of interconnectedness on campus (Strayhorn, 2008).
5	Introduce	**Introduce Student to Possibilities**	When educators ***introduce*** a student to various academic and career-related possibilities, it produces knowledge of potential educational and career paths. Also, acknowledging their strengths is essential to cultivate a strong sense of self-belief in their capabilities. Equipping a student with the knowledge of "what's out there" may spark motivation and give them a goal worth going after.	Nathaniel Cooper discussed how his professors would acknowledge and encourage his talents: *"...so many times they pulled me aside and like, okay, I know that you know the work. I know that you're doing well in the classroom, but can you take....can you take... an active role...."* He ended by discussing how others viewed him as a leader in the classroom: *"They were pushing me to take on more of a leadership role in the classroom in terms of bringing people together to like study. Also, in terms of helping others when they need help, or just being an, uh, active member in the class."*	The excerpt from Nathaniel's interview demonstrates how educators providing feedback to the student can assist them in their academic journey receiving targeted feedback and advice that aligned with their goals (Brooms, 2019). Prior research discovered how supportive environment are paramount in the people's lives (Deci, 1980; Ryan & Deci, 2002, 2012b; Ryan & Deci, 2014, 2016).
6	Envision	**Envision Student Future Successful Outcomes**	Providing detailed examples for the student to ***envision*** what their life could look like beyond college and then bringing it back to the specific actions they need to start during college aids them in processing the steps required to achieve the life they ultimately seek.	Participant Steve Hamlet noted how envisioning a better future was a driver toward his success: *"And that is not where I intend to stay. And that is not the lifestyle I want for my future family. So, what was driving me was my future family and the position that I see myself."*	The literature has cited goal setting to motivate students to succeed in goal attainment (Hsieh et al., 2007).
7	Immerse	**Immerse Student in Experiences Concerning Ultimate Goals**	Assisting a student with gaining rich leadership experiences through promoting ***immersive*** and dynamic situations allows them to practice skills such as: soft-skills, time management, discipline, and focus that can cultivate the necessary skills for academic achievement.	Andrew Smith revealed how his professor was vital in helping him to have an immersive co-curricular experience : *"...him and I we kind of connected on umm... On this tech thing called the raspberry pi and he was... he was was excited that I also said the same interest, so he offered me a uh....stipend program with the with the college that I went to...."* He then described the summer program he was participated in: *"... I did a project with him and there was like a stipend involved and everything and that same summer I also went to South Korea for a robotics program with the same professor...."* Andrew ended by noting the impact that professor had on his initial college success: *"...so I I, uh, really kind of point my success to... my early success to him, because he... he believed in me he he saw the passion that I have a tech."*	Prior research has discovered students who participate in co-curricular activities, e.g., internships and study abroad, have increased academic performance (Binder et al., 2015; Mansfield, 2011) .

Understanding how each student emphasizes being a scholar, musician, athlete, or other identity provides an educator with a foundation to guide them toward successful outcomes. The educator can use the identity as a launching pad for inquiry into their unique interests, strengths, and growth areas. I was inspired by the participants' interview responses and my discussion with data analyst, Oscar Romano, to present the varying levels of competency an educator may have when engaging in Narrative-Driven Educational Practice—please see Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2

Guiding Principles in Action: Levels of Competency for Narrative-Driven Education Practice



The following figures below contain questions that discuss how NDEP can be employed on college campuses with the Black and Latinx male populations. There are seven progressive

levels, starting with the students' salient identities and ending with their future goals. Each level is meant to tease out a different part of their lived experience, help the student reflect on the ways those can transfer to the collegiate environment, and aid educators, in the beginning, in forming a deeper understanding of the student from a holistic point of view.

Prior Training and Delivery of NDEP

Before employing this approach, it would be necessary to (a) provide educators with cultural competency training and (b) equip them with training on various challenges, areas of interest (culturally specific programming for students), and methods of support for the male collegians. Although the questions can be modified to target a continuing student, it would be best to strategically plan an extended orientation or summer bridge programming issues NDEP to immediately immerse students in communicating and writing their new scholarly narratives. Each level should correspond to one day of: (a) first having engaging lectures and activities that touch upon the topic area. One example would be having a presentation or exercise unpacking their identities and then having them write their responses in the afternoon only for Level 1.

I feel it is important to reiterate that their racial and cultural identities should be placed in the foreground. In contrast, their salient identities (which may include their race or ethnicity) should be put in sharp focus. Positioning a student's racial and cultural identity in the foreground still makes those aspects important to their narrative; however, it is secondary to sharply focusing on aspects they find critical to their sense of self. Putting whichever identities students connect with the most as a priority for the educator is not to be confused with downplaying their racial identities. Although discussed earlier in this study, it bears repeating—the intent is not to recreate a one size fits all approach that further marginalizes these populations. Yet, using rigorously conducted research to have a greater sense of what educators may look out for is vital

in designing any program or approach that aims to support students. For example, question two (Figure 5.2) asks a question about holidays and traditions. Questions such as number two are meant to tease out if there are any cultural celebrations they celebrate with the family and the level of importance they place on those culturally specific traditions. Another example would be question number six (Figure 5.3), asking about the importance and significance of attending college for the student and those closest to them. A question like the one just mentioned is meant to key educators into insights such as: is the student a first-generation college student, are their expectations placed on the student to succeed so they can financially support their family after college? The questions are directed at an incoming first-year Black, Latinx (or even Afro-Latinx male) who would enter during an extended orientation for Black and Latinx males or a summer bridge program to acclimate them to the campus. See Figures 5.3–5.9 for Levels 1–7 questions.

Figure 5.3

Guiding Principles in Action: Identifying Salient Identities Level 1 Questions

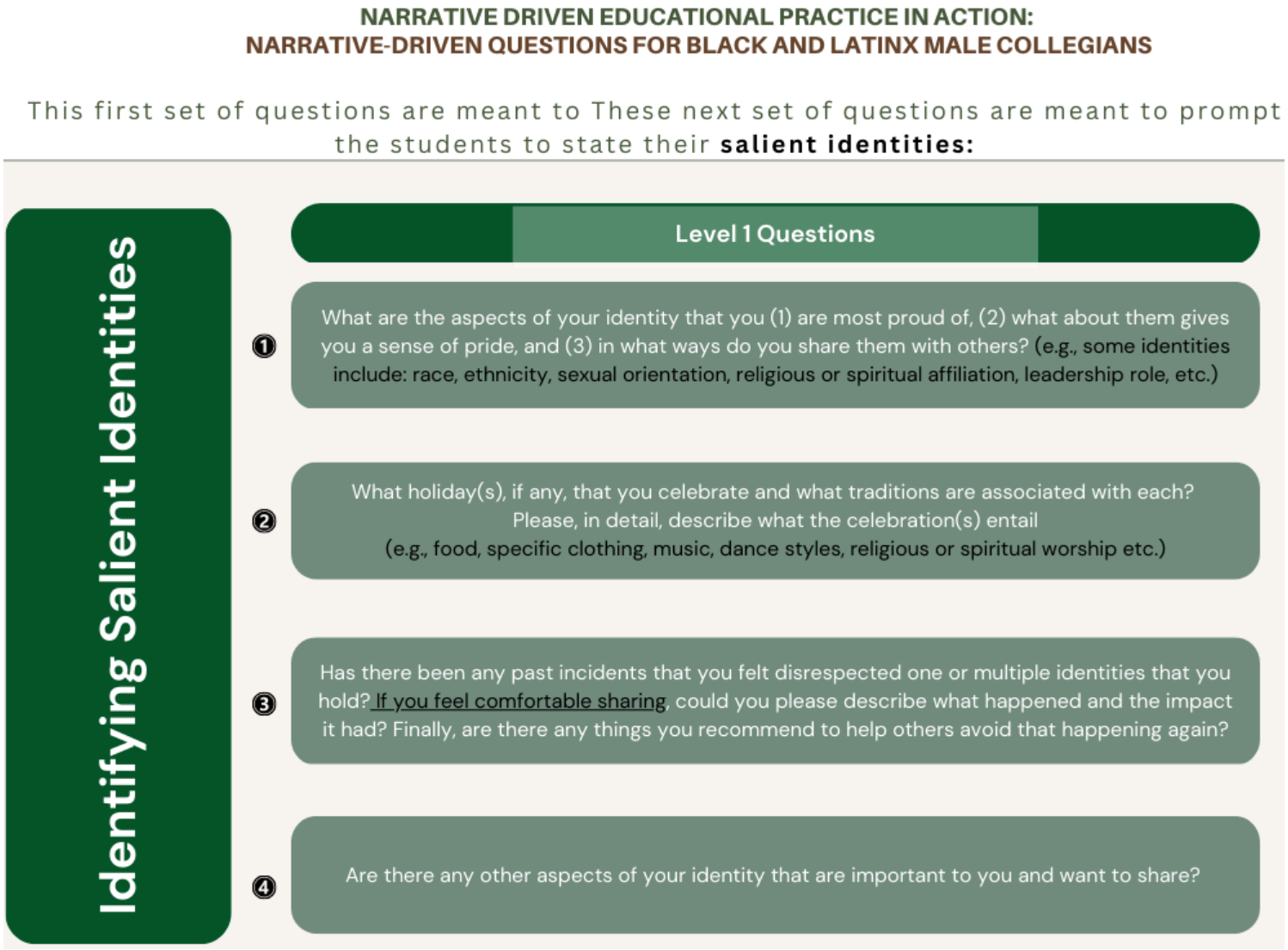


Figure 5.4

Guiding Principles in Action: Motivation and Significance Level 2 Questions

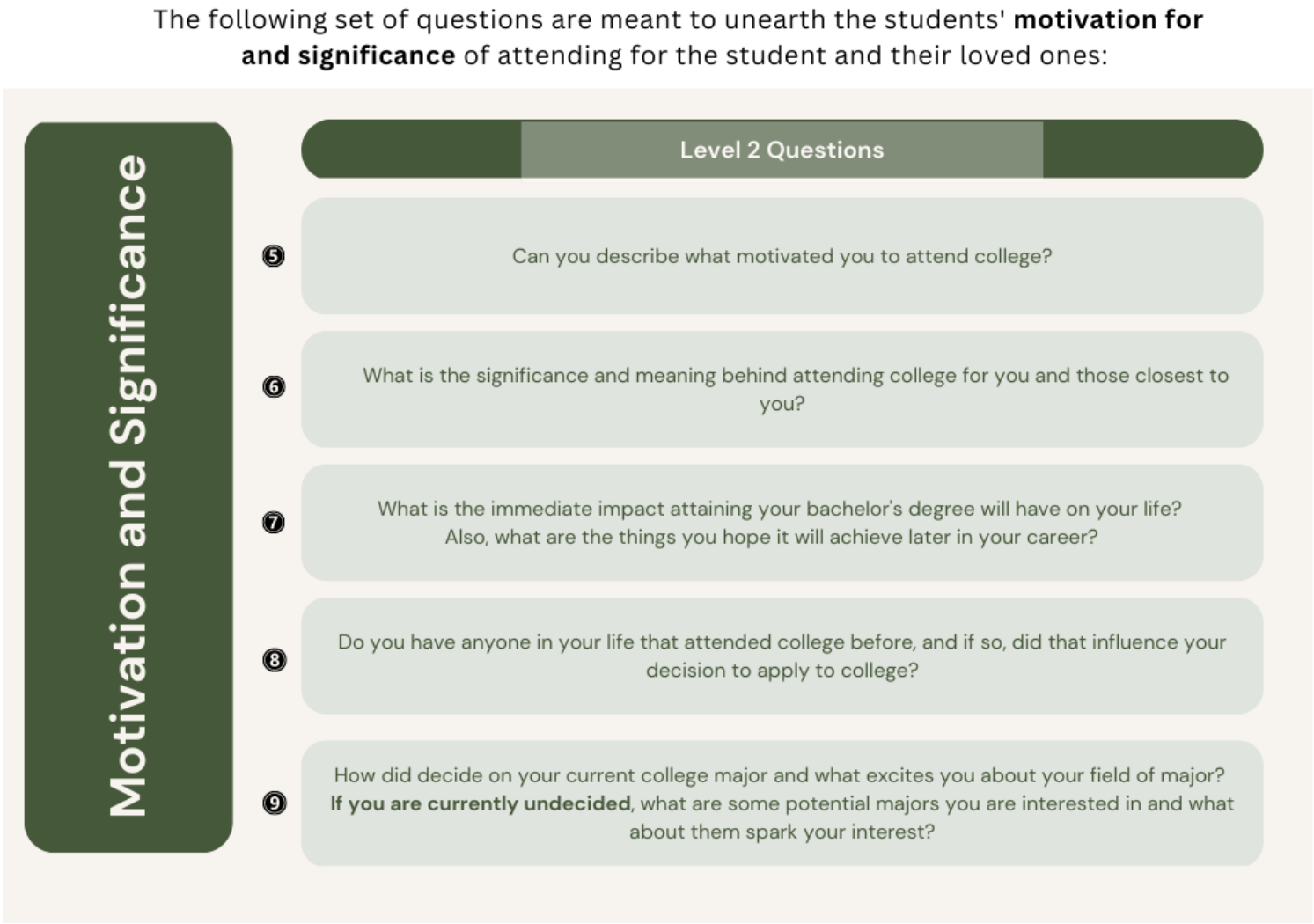


Figure 5.5

Guiding Principles in Action: Support Systems Level 3 Questions

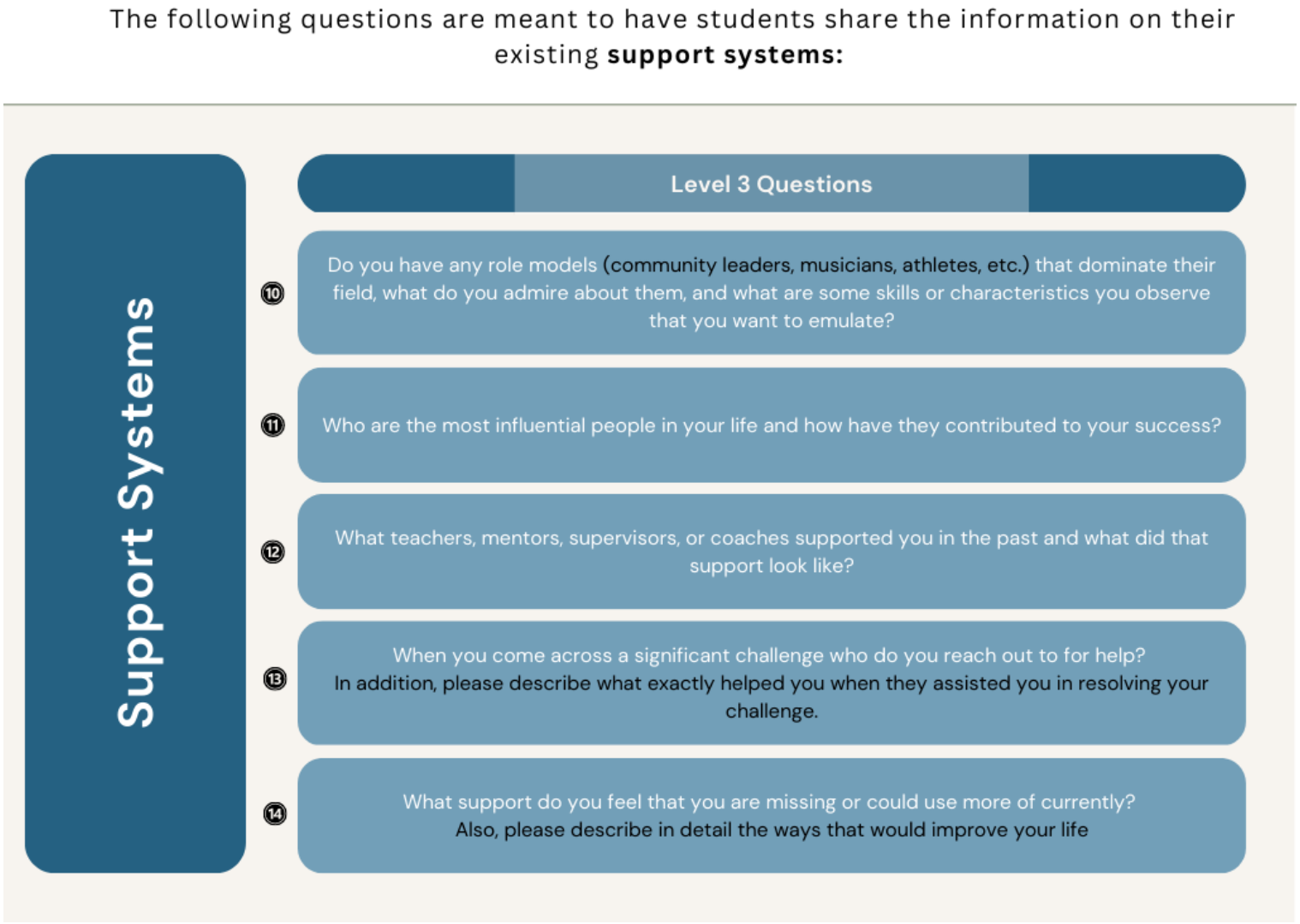


Figure 5.6

Guiding Principles in Action: Pre-Collegiate Experiences Level 4 Questions

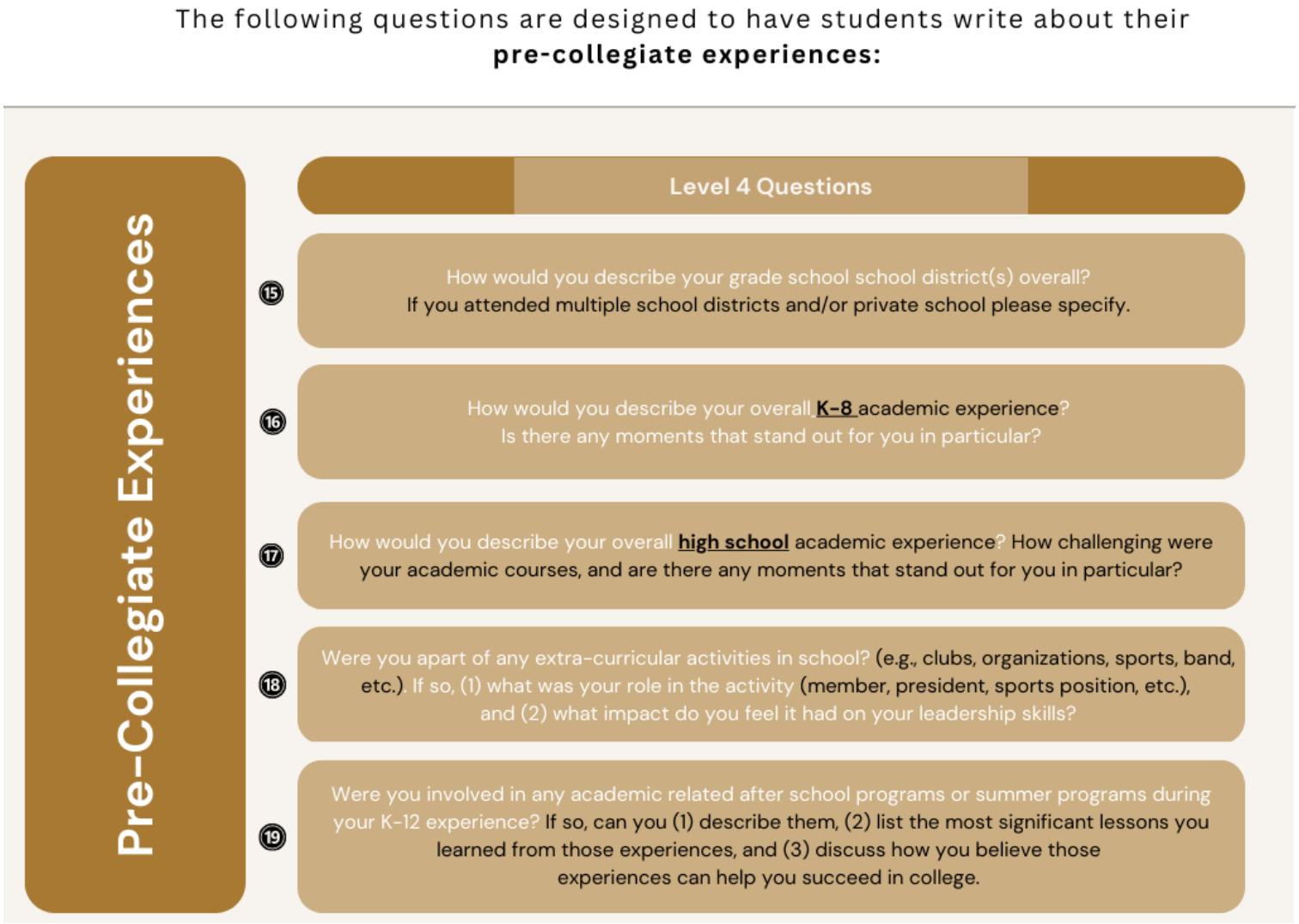


Figure 5.7

Guiding Principles in Action: Strength and Resilience Level 5 Questions

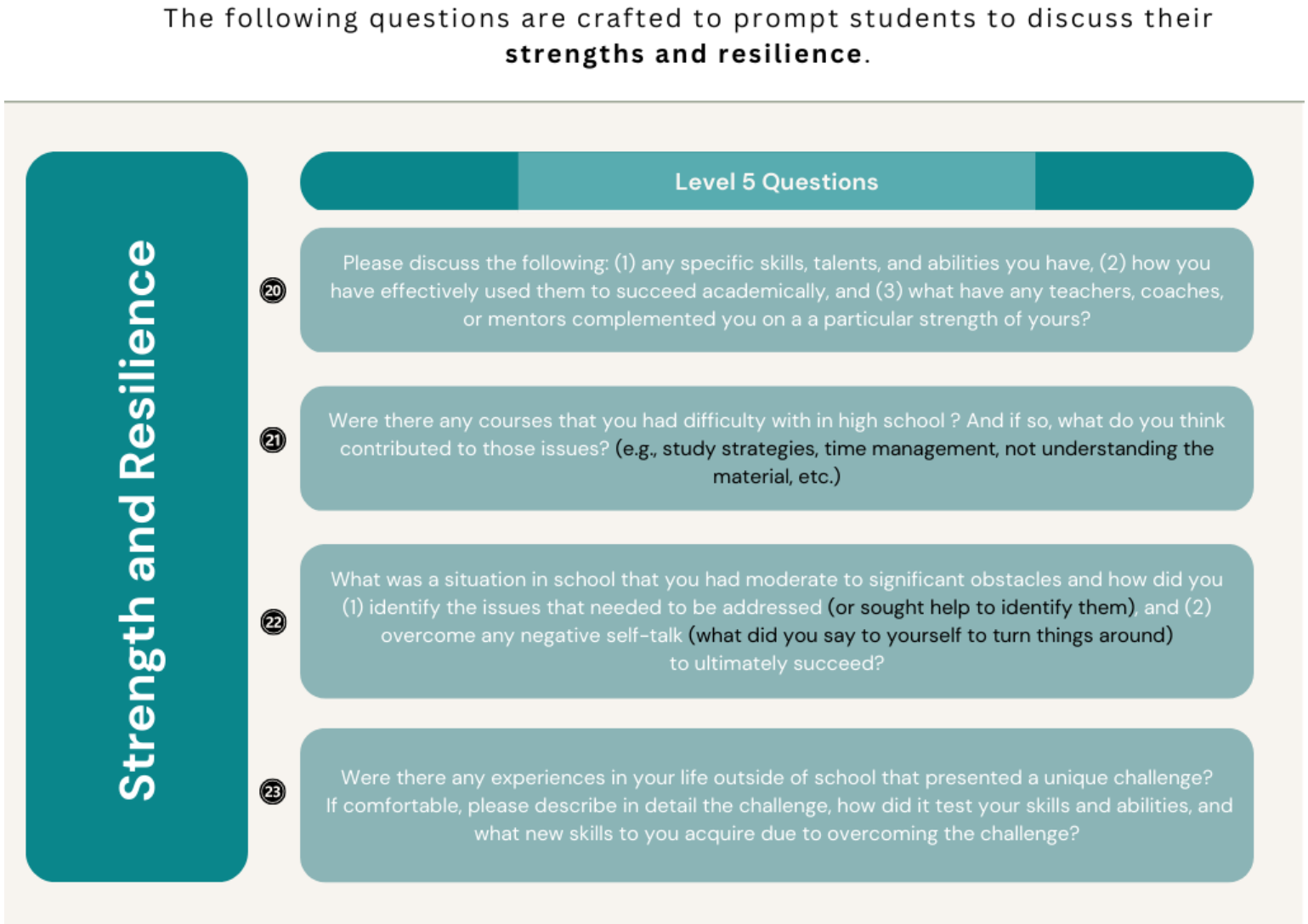


Figure 5.8

Guiding Principles in Action: Challenges and Opportunities for Growth Level 6 Questions

Figure 5.9

Guiding Principles in Action: Future Goals and Aspirations Level 7 Questions

Areas for Future Research

Afro-Latinx Male Support within Collegiate Institutions

Studying Afro-Latinx students within the context of 4-year collegiate institutions and the degree of resources available could produce a meaningful study. This population encounters specific issues surrounding their sense of belonging on campus due to their dual racial and ethnic identities. The existing obstacles that come with being a student of color are only amplified since they struggle to find meaningful connections in the collegiate space. They struggle to navigate their two cultural worlds as some Latinx students may discriminate against Afro-Latinx students due to colorism and not being "a real Latino" if they do not speak Spanish. The Afro-Latinx students may also encounter issues within Black peer groups due to not presenting as "Black enough." Performing a Case Study of an Afro-Latinx resource center or student group may produce detailed insight into how this community adjusts to the tensions experienced by its peers. As discussed previously, encountering discrimination and lacking attachment to the campus environment sparks an increase in psychological distress. Due to the everchanging demographic make-up of American citizens and interracial relationships, I would argue the The Afro-Latinx population will continue to grow significantly, making this a pressing issue for post-secondary institutions to address. An issue this population endures within the cultural groups they identify with is sometimes not being accepted by peers.

Gay Males at HBCUs Navigating Homophobia

An area that arose in conducting this research was navigating homophobia at HBCUs. At a time when the U.S. grapples with the definition of marriage and enacting federally recognized laws to recognize gay marriage, how these conversations look within predominately Black spaces would be beneficial to examine for Black gay males and the scholarly community.

Examining how gay Black males are supported within HBCUs and ways educators combat homophobia on their campuses is one avenue to explore. Discussing the topic of toxic masculinity for Black men and any harmful views surrounding the gay community within our current political climate may yield results that aid the LGBTQIA+ population. A study that again uses Narrative Inquiry can tease out the complex issues regarding this topic.

Faculty and Staff Observations on Academic Success

Performing research that examines high academic performance for Black and Latinx males through the lens of educators of color would be another interesting topic to explore. Selecting to conduct a multi-case study that looks at a few different collegiate institutions that retain faculty members known for having high success rates with each group may glean exciting results. Having collegiate institutions in other geographical locations could also speak to that area's specific advantages and problems. The study could also reveal effective strategies that the faculty members employ to produce academic achievement.

Leveraging the Metaverse to Improve Collegiate Academic Success

Based on the current pace of technological advancement and how technology is embedded within learning environments, I would argue collegiate institutions are about to undergo a seismic shift. Although it will occur over decades, Kye et al. (2021) discuss the transition will likely see post-secondary institutions embrace Virtual Reality (VR), Mixed Reality (MR), and the Metaverse. They discuss how virtual reality is a remote space for learners to interact and engage with objects in the digital world. Mixed reality, as the researchers described, allows students to wear a device (e.g., glasses with digital enhancements) that enables the user to see digital objects overlayed in the real world—for example, seeing a miniature digital recreation of the Eiffel Tower on a student desk. The Metaverse focuses on a shared space

connected to a myriad of immersive digital environments within a single virtual world (Kye et al., 2021). For example, imagine being thrust into a virtual world that places the user in a middle of a virtual HBCU homecoming filled with music, dancing, and personal interactions.

Participants in this dissertation study who attended college during the COVID-19 pandemic faced unique obstacles. Their challenges concerned learning and comprehension of concepts due to changing to a one hundred percent online environment. There were practical issues, such as not having enough licenses to have students use special programs within engineering and computer science majors. Some participants affected by the pandemic also encountered issues with access to reliable internet and computer devices. They also had difficulty with lessons partially requiring hands-on engagement, especially ones relying heavily on motor skills, dexterity, and sense of touch. Research that focuses on providing equitable solutions to issues regarding technology and access for minoritized students is a timely conversation in the wake of these emerging technologies. Conducting research with Black and Latinx males that introduce them to digital environments (e.g., the Metaverse), leveraging the technology to design their future academic success, and visually experiencing it in a virtually rendered environment may yield fascinating results. Researchers can conduct a longitudinal mixed-method study that measures (via a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews) the impact of the technology on Black and Latinx male collegians' academic success. Finally, they can analyze the academic impact after several sessions—over a few semesters—of revisiting their designs.

Personal Reflections

Reflections on Navigating Tensions Surrounding My Authentic Voice

Some moments made me reflect on my privilege of mostly being in educational environments that, while harmful to some of my identities, such as being Afro-Latinx, the schools would often have adequate or abundant resources. Navigating predominately White spaces for most of my educational career did help with learning the unspoken language and expectations within academia. However, it made me realize that in the process may have stripped away my authentic voice and become hyper-aware of how I show up in academic settings.

My level of authenticity became particularly evident when I engaged with the participants. In an attempt to fulfill those unspoken rules of how to show up as a student and doctoral-level researcher, I found myself embodying a scholarly identity that I had not intentionally created but created out of past necessity to meet the expectations in predominantly White spaces. Although I found that this caused a disconnect when talking to some of the participants. Projecting a voice that sounded removed from our shared sense of community created a barrier. Unless an interview had an authentic voice and vernacular arise in conversation, they typically saw my then unintentionally formed scholar identity. Participants, however, did get to see my true authentic voice when having brief informal conversations once the recording ended, conversations involving obtaining a copy of the final dissertation. I felt more comfortable utilizing the vernacular of my shared sense of identity with the participants once the interviews were over. The participants then seemed to respond to me in a way that was more inviting and understanding.

The difference in response was particularly true for one participant, Trey, who discussed his experience as a gay male. Toward the interview's beginning, he was unaware of my gay

identity. When I realized he seemed to be explaining different aspects of the LGBTQIA+ population as if I was an outsider, I finally disclosed my sexual orientation. From the moment of my disclosure to the end of the interview, his overall tone and engagement changed. The participant's language in discussing these topics became more inclusive, going from my experience to ours.

The topic of academic identities and authentic voice raised questions about how researchers and practitioners are often expected to leave their cultural identities and authentic sense of self "at the door." I also thought about my impact on these individuals and how I was limited in providing support after interviewing them. I felt the tension of not being able to connect them to any resources or general support concerning their careers and educational aspirations, especially after hearing about their inspiring experiences. It left me thinking about how all qualitative research should have higher standards regarding supporting marginalized communities versus extracting data and ending it there. I acknowledge that scholars have written about the same issues of impact within marginalized communities and researchers' ethical obligations. I still felt limited in what I could provide to these participants other than creating a follow-up study in conducting action research.

Personal Reflections on the Research Process

Before I began the study, I hypothesized about participants' academic milestones and their high academic performance. My theory was that participants might be able to illuminate potential collegiate milestones, demonstrating a need for additional academic support. An example would be a student discussing particular challenges at the beginning of their second semester of junior year. However, after conversations with my dissertation committee and reflecting on the nature of the study, I wanted to ensure the participants truly guided the

interviews. I frequently grappled with the use of RTA and my reflexivity within that process. I took extra precautions during the interviews by ensuring they were telling the story they wanted to share. I did this through various follow-up questions for clarity, such as, when you say you had a feeling they did not want to interact with you, what gave you that impression?

Reflections on My Salient Identities as an Afro-Latinx Male and a Scholar

I was very mindful of my Afro-Latinx identity. Also, by virtue of my complexion and Black phenotypes, I can, and in almost all cases at some levels, be seen as an insider to our shared racial and ethnic backgrounds. There were moments I felt heightened tension due to my fears of having to justify and defend my findings because of my insider status. I did not want anyone to suggest or imply that my ability to have a "silent knowing" of some of the experiences the participants shared created results that the scholarly community may not accept. At the beginning of interviews, I went as far as even beginning to state that I may ask them to define something like code-switching or other terms; they may wonder why I would ever ask as a person of color. My thoughts are that, on the one hand, as a researcher, it is part of conducting a rigorous qualitative study that teases out their personal views, beliefs, and emotions. On the other hand, an additional layer was inescapable throughout the process. One participant excerpt I related to the most was the old saying: "need to work twice as hard." And although I believe much of these fears and tensions surrounding this issue were self-imposed, I also find that it speaks to the existing narratives with Black and Latinx males in society today.

Reflections on Hearing Stories of Trauma, Difficulties, and Loss

Another piece that served as a challenge was hearing the various traumas and challenges each participant encountered along their collegiate journey. There were moments after an interview, whether it was hearing how a participant dealt with the loss of a loved one,

experienced a form of racial trauma, or had to continue their coursework without having a home, that gave me pause. Hearing those experiences made me reflect on my privilege as a scholar and practitioner in education. I also reflected on my difficulties throughout my educational journey. I frequently found myself holding the inspiring parts of their experiences and, at times, the gut-wrenching details of their lived experiences. Still, I feel honored to have had those shared experiences of Black and Latinx males who consistently strive for excellence and do their best to empower others.

In Chapter I, I asked the question: How can educators design an educational experience where Black and Latinx males can see a future in our society? I find that using a Narrative-Driven approach is one small step in addressing these more important macro-level questions and challenges. One theme consistent throughout each participant's story was that whether it was a parent, a peer, faculty, or staff member, investing time in empowering and modeling excellence for these students is a crucial part of their success. For educators who may feel disempowered by the bureaucracy and minutia of antiquated systems, I hope the narratives from these males demonstrate the ability of any individual who is mindful and strategic in their approach to aid them in achieving their educational goals. And as is the case for many Black and Latinx males, to help them achieve their personal goals of thriving in their careers to support or honor their families.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this dissertation was to continue the dialogue concerning the creation o intentional and meaningful forms of support for this population (e.g., creating effective programs, mentorship, etc.). I cannot pretend to have solved a systemic issue many scholars and practitioners have grappled with for generations, nor was that ever my intent.

However, I can say that providing the scholarly community with guiding principles that can complement other approaches is an essential step forward. I fervently believe that consciously acknowledging Black and Latinx males' experiences with dignity and respect is crucial to creating environments where they can thrive. As I stated in Chapter II, it is not my intent to dispel any data that discusses challenges with Black and Latinx male students who nationally have lower degree attainment rates or males who live in single-parent households. Yet, how educators frame the conversation is paramount to connecting with both populations. I believe it is possible to hold space for quantitative data that point to current challenges within Black and Latinx communities and forward-looking solutions that address core issues for both populations.

The emphasis, however, should be forward-looking. Once again, discussing each population with dignity is the first step to garnering support from the males' respective communities. Learning about past and current struggles that Black and Latinx communities have been through creates a strong foundation of understanding and generating solutions that work. Understanding distinctions between groups and their salient identities is vital to building trust in educational systems and fostering strong parental engagement. Enacting institutional change requires a visionary leader. An educational leader seeking to produce culturally responsive changes should not only set out to execute a strategic plan but aim to deliver powerful experiences of self and community reflection, group discussion, and collective action toward dismantling racist ideals and perpetuating harmful narratives. These experiences should awaken their campus community to the realities of what has historically been and provoke a shared vision amongst the community of positive changes to come.

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APPENDIX A: SAMPLE CONTACT EMAIL TO ADMINISTRATORS

Good Morning/Good Afternoon,

My name is Christopher James, and I am a Doctoral Candidate in Antioch University's Ph.D. for Leadership and Change. I will be conducting a dissertation study towards the end of May of this year.

I am currently seeking individuals to participate in my dissertation research who meet the following criterion:

- Black and Latinx Male Alumni (3.0 GPA and above).
- Individuals who were between the ages of 18-24 at the time of attendance.
- Individuals who have graduated with their bachelor's degree (between 2017 and 2022).

-Research Question: What are the experiences that helped you to be academically successful?

-Research Focus: This study is meant to highlight Black and Latinx males who thrive in the collegiate setting, so my dissertation can be used as a resource to help educators implement strategies that help replicate success for this population on their campus.

-Logistics (recently updated): I will conduct a one-hour individual interview. It would be recorded on video during a Zoom video conference. I will need between 16-20 Black and Latinx male participants total. It is my hope to use the experiences shared in these interviews to provide educators with practical steps to implement more inclusive and equitable resources for Black and Latinx males.

I wanted to see if you would be willing to connect me with any Black and Latinx male alumni or current students from your institution to participate in my study?

Thank you in advance for your support with this matter.

Christopher James

Ph.D. Candidate C’19

Graduate School of Leadership and Change, Antioch University

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE CONTACT EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

Good Afternoon,

Dissertation Study Details:

My name is Christopher James, and I am a Doctoral Candidate in Antioch University's Ph.D. for Leadership and Change. I was provided your contact information by a colleague who recommended you as a potential candidate for my dissertation study. This would be a one-time interview lasting between 60-90 minutes. **All of your personal identifying information will be redacted and kept confidential. The interview would be conducted within the next three weeks.**

Qualifications/Inclusion Criteria: I am currently seeking individuals to participate in my dissertation research who meet the following criterion:

- Black and Latinx Male Identifying Alumni in the U.S. (3.0 GPA and above).
- Individuals who were between the ages of 18-24 at the time of attendance.
- Individuals who have graduated with their bachelor's degree within the past 5 years (dating back to 2017).

-Research Question: What are the experiences that helped you to be academically successful?

-Research Focus: This study is meant to highlight Black and Latinx males who thrive in the collegiate setting, so my dissertation can be used as a resource to help educators implement strategies that help replicate success for this population on their campus.

-Logistics (recently updated): I will conduct a one-hour individual interview. It would be recorded on video during a Zoom video conference. I will need between 16-20 Black and Latinx male participants total. It is my hope to use the experiences shared in these interviews to provide educators with practical steps to implement more inclusive and equitable resources for Black and Latinx males.

Thank you,
Chris
--
Christopher James
Antioch University C19
PhD Leadership and Change

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A DISSERTATION RESEARCH STUDY

This informed consent form is for _____ who I am inviting to participate in a project titled: Excellence by Design: Successful Academic Strategies of Black and Latinx College Males.

Name of Principle Investigator: Christopher James

Name of Organization: Antioch University, PhD in Leadership and Change

Name of Project: Excellence by Design: Successful Academic Strategies of Black and Latinx College Males.

You will be given a copy of the Consent Form

Introduction

My name is Christopher James and I am a Doctoral Candidate in Antioch University's Ph.D. for Leadership and Change. I will be conducting a dissertation study/project in partial fulfillment of this degree. I am completing a dissertation designed to research the experiences of Black and Latinx male graduates that speak to their academic success in college. Please feel free to communicate with your network and support systems to decide if you'd like to participate. Also, please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Purpose of the Dissertation

The purpose of this project is to use the methodology–narrative inquiry–to investigate and analyze the experiences of Black and Latinx male graduates that can speak to their academic success at a 4-year college or university, while hearing their unique perspectives within a U.S. context.

Project Activities

This project will involve your participation in a one-on-one interview. All interviews will be video/audio recorded via a video conference (e.g., Zoom) that that will take place in real time. Interviews will be recorded via video and audio solely for research purposes.

Participant Selection

You have been selected for this project because you meet the following criterion:

- Black and Latinx Male Alumni (3.0 GPA and above).
- Between the ages of 18-24 at the time of attendance.
- Graduated with their bachelor's degree within the past 5 years (dating back to 2017);

Note: There are between 16-20 participants total who are a part of this study.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this project is strictly voluntary and you can choose to withdraw your consent to participate or you may immediately stop/discontinue your involvement in this project at any time. There will be no repercussions for choosing to either not participate or withdrawing consent at a later time. After the interview, you have the option to decline to have your information be included in this project and written report.

Risks

There will be topics that may bring up aspects of your past history concerning any potential experiences of racism, prejudice, stereotyping, and/or discrimination. However, with that said, I do not anticipate that you will be harmed or distressed while participating. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you may ask to leave the interview and withdraw your consent to participate. **In the event you feel you need access to any mental health support please call the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) hotline at: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264).** The hotline is open **Monday through Friday from 10 AM – 10 PM, EST. For 24/7 support you may reach a volunteer Crisis Counselor at the National Crisis Text Line by texting the word HOME to 741741.**

Benefits

Your participation in this project will allow for educators at collegiate institutions to gain a greater understanding of the experiences of Black and Latinx males. In addition, provide them with potential ideas and practical strategies to implement resources that are inclusive and equitable. However, there is no direct benefit to you.

Reimbursements

There are no financial incentives or service of any kind that will be provided in exchange for participation in this project.

Confidentiality

The participant information in this project will be kept confidential and anonymous. All identifying information will be redacted and a pseudonym will be written in place of your real name to protect your identity. All of your information (video/audio recordings, notes, forms, etc.) will be locked in a secure location. At the conclusion of this project your collected data will be destroyed.

Overall, I am able to provide confidentiality with a couple of exceptions:

- Abuse of a child or an adult who is vulnerable (e.g., elderly individual).
- Active plans to commit cause harm to themselves or others (e.g., planning suicide, self-injurious behaviors, or assault).

- Specific quotes that will be used in the final published dissertation (certain individual identifiers will be redacted to maintain privacy). The dissertation will be a published document that is uploaded online for open access and also available for print.

Laws require that professionals/graduate researchers in certain fields be considered mandated reporters and take action in the event they feel a person may harm themselves or others. A government agency, based on the state and jurisdiction, must be contacted if there are plans to hurt yourself or others. As the lead graduate researcher of this project and a Graduate Student of Antioch University, I will be mandated to report any of the above. Before moving forward and consenting to this study, it is essential you ask any clarifying questions regarding confidentiality. Please remember, unless anything meets the exceptions above, your information will be kept confidential.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Under no circumstance do you have to consent if you choose not to participate in this project. Again, you may withdraw your consent or you may immediately stop/discontinue your participation at any time without any repercussions.

Contact Information

For questions at any stage of the process, please feel free to contact me at: [Redacted].

For any potential ethical concerns regarding this study, contact Lisa Kreeger, PhD, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Antioch University PhD in Leadership and Change, Email: [Redacted] or Jon Wergin, PhD, Committee Chair, Email: [Redacted].

DO YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT?

I have read all the information in this consent form, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask any and all questions regarding the consent. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to participate in this project.

Print Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: **_____**

Date: _____
Day/Month/Year

DO YOU CONSENT TO BE AUDIOTAPED/VIDEO RECORDED AS PART OF THIS PROJECT?

I voluntarily agree to be audiotaped and video recorded for this project. I consent to allow the use of my recordings as described in this form.

Print Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

DO YOU CONSENT TO HAVE YOUR QUOTES INCLUDED IN THE FINAL PUBLICATION OF THIS PROJECT?

I voluntarily agree to have quotes published online and in print (certain individual identifiers will be redacted to maintain privacy). I consent to allow the use of direct quotes as described in this form.

Print Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/Month/Year

To be filled out by the person taking consent (Researcher):

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the project and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of person taking the consent:

_____

Signature of person taking the consent:

_____

Date: _____

Day/Month/Year

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS AND FOLLOW-UP/PROMPTS

1. What are the specific habits you used during college to be academically successful? (e.g., finding ways to stay focused, approaching your assignments in a specific way).
2. When you faced any type of academic challenge what did you (a) say to yourself to stay motivated and (b) what was your plan of action to overcome the challenge?
3. What role did your family plan in your academic success in college?
4. Did you have any faculty that acted as either formal or informal mentors, and did they help you achieve academic success?
5. Were there any groups or organizations that you were a part of that positively impacted your college experience?
6. Is there anything important about your undergraduate or graduate experiences to know that I did not ask about already?

FOLLOW-UP/PROMPTS:

1. Would you mind expounding on that topic a bit more?
2. When you mentioned _____ in what ways do you feel that affected your overall academic performance?
3. At one point you shared _____do you have an example that you can share?
4. In what ways do you feel _____affected your college experience?
5. You named_____as a person who really supported you. Can you tell me the specific things they did to support you during your college years?

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE CODE/RESEARCHER MEANING CHECKING EMAIL

Good Morning/Afternoon, _____

This email is in regards to the Zoom interview you participated in discussing the college experiences that led to your academic success for my dissertation study.

If possible, could you please review the attached documents and let me know if you have any changes that would be greatly appreciated.

I wanted to share with you the following:

- The extended profile I constructed (**using your selected pseudonym**).

Please let me know if you have anything you feel like is not accurate or that may need to be changed. **Document is attached below.**

Also, please note that what is written is subject to change even after your comments, due to feedback from my editors and dissertation committee.

If you would **not** like to review, please simply reply to this email stating you would not like to participate in the review process.

Thank you,

Christopher James

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE EMAIL TO DATA ANALYSTS

Good Morning/Good Afternoon, _____

I have received the transcripts for the interviews and they are attached below. All identifying information has been redacted. The demographics of the population are as follows:

- Black and Latinx Male Alumni in the U.S. (3.0 GPA and above and were involved in extra/co-curricular activities).
- Participants were between the ages of 18-24 at the time of attendance.
- There are participants who graduated with their bachelor's degree within the past 5 years (dating back to 2017).
- Some participants are currently enrolled at a four-year institution.

Some of the participants are geographically disbursed across the country. They range from various socioeconomic statuses, parental educations levels (e.g., first-generation student), and levels of pre-college preparedness.

Upon my initial review of the videos/transcripts I constructed the following themes:

• Theme A

• Theme B

• Theme C

• Theme D

Since I am performing a Reflexive Thematic Analysis, the intention is not to check for accuracy, but rather to give me your impressions of the transcripts, recordings, and themes I constructed. If possible, please respond within the next two weeks. If additional time is needed, then please let me know at least few days before. I deeply appreciate your assistance. Any feedback is welcomed!

Thank you for your help with this.

-Chris

APPENDIX G: COPYRIGHT APPROVAL STATEMENT FROM DR. SHAUN HARPER FOR ANTI-DEFICIT FRAMEWORK IMAGE

ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY

Re: Seeking Dr. Harper's Permission to Use Anti-Deficit Image in My Dissertation

Shaun Harper Thu, Oct 27, 2022
To: Christopher James

The Approval Statement

I, **Dr. Shaun Harper**, **authorize and approve the image** ***of Dr. Shaun Harper's Anti-Deficit Framework image (image below) to be published in Christopher T. James' Doctoral Dissertation.*** The original Anti-Deficit Framework image was published at the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. James is a student at Antioch University's Ph.D. in Leadership and Change program. He is currently writing his dissertation. **I am aware the dissertation will be published in all formats.** For example: published in print, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database, OhioLink Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center, and Antioch University Repository and Archive (AURA). I acknowledge that the links below are where they will be published.

As one of the copyright holders and/or original contributors, the use of this image is approved by myself, Dr. Shaun Harper, without a time limit for its usage. In addition, I, **Dr. Shaun Harper**, also acknowledge that **the University of Pennsylvania, the publishing institution of the image, has already approved the use of the image contingent upon my approval**.

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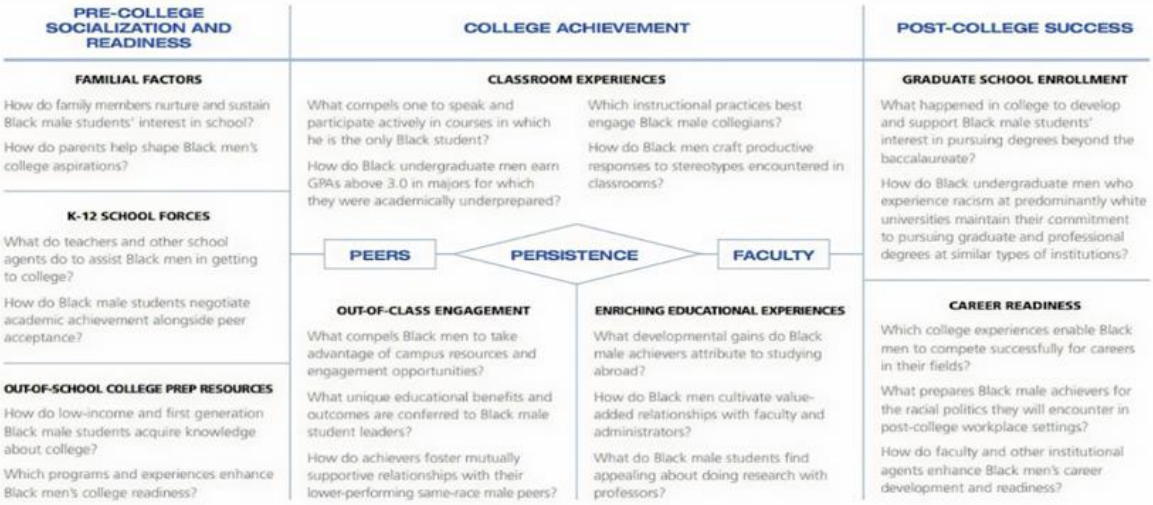

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Coffman, Wendy B Mon, Sep 20, 2021
To: Christopher James

Hi Chris,

Below is our approval statement. Let me know if you need anything else.

Approval Statement

The Communications Department at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania authorizes and approves the image of Dr. Shaun Harper's Anti-Deficit Framework image to be published in Christopher James' Doctoral Dissertation. Mr. James is a student at Antioch University's Ph.D. in Leadership and Change program, currently writing his dissertation. I am aware the dissertation will be published in the following places: published in print, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database, OhioLink Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center, and Antioch University Repository and Archive (AURA). The institution acknowledges that the links below are where they will be published. As one of the copyright holders, the use of this image *is approved by our institution without a time limit for its usage with the understanding Dr. Shaun Harper will also need to provide permission of use.*

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Best regards,
Wendy Coffman

Wendy Coffman (she/her) | | Graduate School of Education | University of Pennsylvania

APPENDIX I: EXTENDED PARTICIPANT PROFILES—INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHTS

In Chapter III, I noted the importance of providing a counter space for marginalized voices and identities. I have sought to continue to center the voices and salient identities of the Black and Latinx male participants by providing a more comprehensive profile for each participant. I intentionally wanted to offer more space within the appendices of this dissertation to provide the reader with additional insights, participant characteristics, and moments essential to their narratives.

Although I use affirming and empowering language, using an anti-deficit lens to describe each participant, not all parts of their narratives lend themselves to positive behaviors or outcomes. I ensured that participants' challenges (such as how they navigated personal and academic challenges) and they are displayed in the findings. As stated in Chapter II, I want to continue highlighting that both populations are multifaceted and, like anyone else, engage in the fullness of the human experience. Each of the extended profiles furnishes the following: an *Overview* of the participant (age range, race or ethnicity, etc.), *Significant Experiences Impacting Academics*, and *Personal Characteristics* (the characteristics were based on how I viewed the participant and their lived experiences with corresponding participant quotes).

Profiles also include: the participants' *Ultimate Concern/Reason for Degree Attainment*, participants' *Personal Definition of Academic Success*, and any *Additional Notes on the Participant* that contribute to the overall understanding of the participant. To reiterate what was stated in Chapter IV, aside from major grammatical issues that may confuse the reader, the participants' direct quotes have not been altered to reflect their authentic voices. Whenever an asterisk (*) is included within a participant quote, I have replaced a piece of personal identifying

information with a general word to continue the flow of the excerpt. Ellipses (…) were used to ensure brevity while capturing the quote's essence. The following participants on the next page are numbered in order based on the date of their interview:

Participant 1: Andrew Smith

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Andrew Smith is a Latinx male between the ages of 25-27 years old. He graduated from a small-private PWI in the Northeastern Region. Andrew identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2019 with a cumulative GPA of 3.2 and a degree in Computer Science. Andrew is heavily invested in the development of technical knowledge within his field. He is also highly driven and intellectually curious. Andrew uses his strong bond with his mother and acquired skillset to build a life filled with success.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Adjusting to a Predominately White Space**
   He initially did not have peers with whom he could speak Spanish and form connections. Andrew, in the beginning, also felt tension surrounding his sense of belonging and identifying with other Latinx students at his PWI.

2. **External Support Programs**
   Andrew attended two programs not affiliated with his college that helped build soft and technical skills and aided in attaining internships.

3. **Internships**
   He engaged in a few internships at high-profile companies. Andrew cited these experiences as providing insight into the technical pieces he needed to succeed academically and post-graduation.

4. **Forming Relationships with Other Latinx Students**
   Andrew found individuals who could understand his cultural identity and relate to similar life experiences.

5. **Faculty Mentorship**
   He cited connecting with a faculty mentor who shared an interest in technology and could mentor, empower, and provide growth opportunities.

6. **Study Abroad**
   Andrew experienced a different culture while studying in South Korea.

Participant 1: Andrew Smith

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Adaptable

Andrew had to learn to navigate various new environments such as: internships, his study abroad in South Korea, etc.

Participant Quote

"...it was an invaluable experience, you know? Not just like the tech side... also like the culture side of things."

Ambitious

He sought out participants in internships with high-profile companies.

Participant Quote

"...I got to see what it's really like to work for a really big company, and from there, I can see, like, how my career can really evolve, and I can go into a career and succeed in the ways that I want to succeed."

Curious

Andrew was interested in his specific discipline and learning new things.

Participant Quote

"...there's a lot of times where I would, you know, go on YouTube and search up how do I build the website with Python?"

Self-Starter

He identified a need within one of his internships (without any prior directive) and created a solution to address a need within the department.

Participant Quote

"...I would, like, just go through...multiple, multiple videos in a given day to, like, learn how to do a specific thing...very technical things that I still hadn't learned yet....."

Participant 1: Andrew Smith

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

Andrew wanted to succeed in college to provide and give back to his mother for supporting him throughout his life.

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"...is having the experiences because I don't think it's all about grades. I think it's about having the experiences that aligns you and puts you in the right position to be successful in your career."

Occupation

He is in the Software Engineering Field.

Strong Connection to Cultural Identity

Andrew connects strongly to aspects of his culture such as: Spanish language, music, and dance.

Participant 2: Mike Brown

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Mike Brown is a Latinx male between the ages of 22-25. He attended a small-private (Christian) HSI in the Northeastern Region. Mike graduated in 2022 with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 and a degree in Nursing. He graduated during the secondary part of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, he embraced the challenge of studying for STEM-related courses. Mike exhibits empathy, thoughtfulness, and a keen awareness of his surroundings. Furthermore, he displayed an ability to create pathways, despite complications, to attain academic success.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Pre-College Experiences**
   He attended a high school with STEM courses to prepare for college-level coursework.

2. **Adjusting to a PWI**
   Mike had to adjust from being schooled in a primarily Black and Latinx environment to interacting with mostly White peers and educators with different life experiences and cultural interests.

3. **Caring for a Family Member**
   He assisted his grandmother, who required medical attention.

4. **Equal Opportunity Fund Program**
   Mike participated in this program that provided him with financial support and guidance during his college experience.

5. **Supportive Faculty & Staff**
   He cited at least one professor who was able to invest in helping him understand the course material and be flexible to his circumstances.

6. **Experiencing Racial & Ethnic Discrimination Through Othering**
   Mike sometimes noticed that some peers were not understanding or interested in learning about his identity or past experiences due to where he grew up.

Participant 2: Mike Brown

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Adaptable**

  Mike has demonstrated in the past that he can be adaptable to new situations and learn and implement new skills.

- **Participant Quote**

  Referring to his high school teacher: *"It was a very good experience. At the beginning, it was hard because nobody was used to his teaching style, but he said...this is what you need to do to pass your classes and be successful..."*

  Mike then stated: *"And I carried that with me going into college and throughout my years."*

- **Resourceful**

  He figured out methods to accomplish his goals with limited access to certain resources.

- **Participant Quote**

  "I couldn't afford my anatomy book, so that professor, she would go over a chapter or two every time we had her....."

  Mike next stated how he attained the information he needed: *"...I would have to borrow information or the book from another classmate, or I would have to really pay attention during her lectures because she didn't have PowerPoints that she would share."*

- **Committed**

  Mike stayed committed to the process despite technical issues during COVID-19 with his computer.

- **Participant Quote**

  "It was a difficult time. And that was during the very beginning of COVID-19. My coach...he helped me through it. He had a sibling of his...who fixed my computer."

Participant 2: Mike Brown

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Family Oriented**

  He intentionally created time to balance his grandmother's care.

- **Participant Quote**

  "For me personally, sometimes when I had her class, it would be hard to study or hard to complete an assignment on time because I have a grandma who has ⁎health problems…."

He ended by stating: *"So, taking care of her would sometimes interfere. It's not like I didn't want to do the assignments or study, but to me, my family comes first."*

Note: the word health was interchanged with the participant's actual wording to protect sensitive health information.

Participant 2: Mike Brown

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

Mike seeks to work in the nursing field. **Note:** further reasoning was not brought up during the interview.

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"Maintaining a high level of knowledge in your area of study or major and striving for the highest letter grade or number grade possible, and doing anything you can to better yourself....."

Occupation

Food Service Industry

Other Information

College Athlete: Mike played soccer in college.

Future Aspirations: Mike's goal is to work in the nursing field.

Participant 3: Chris Jackson

GRADUATION YEAR 2020

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Chris Jackson is a Black male between the ages of 24-27. Chris graduated from a small-private PWI in the Northeastern Region. He identified as a first-generation college student. Chris graduated in 2020 with a cumulative GPA of 3.7 and a degree in Accounting. He graduated towards the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chris is an individual that relies on his habits, goals, and self-discipline to create high levels of success in his life. The stories Chris presented throughout his collegiate career demonstrated his extreme drive, commitment to personal growth, and solid ability to execute his goals.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Parental Influence**
   They gave him discipline toward his academic work starting in grade school (e.g., doing extra assignments to facilitate understanding).

2. **Basketball**
   Chris utilized the basketball team's GPA requirement to stay on top of his academic work.

3. **Faculty**
   His faculty aided with understanding concepts directly after class and provided encouragement.

4. **COVID-19**
   The pandemic negatively affected his academics and prompted him to put extra time into assignments.

5. **Internship**
   He had an internship that aided him in his organizational and time management skills.

6. **Parental Influence**
   They provided him with discipline toward his academic work starting in grade school (e.g., doing extra assignments to facilitate understanding).

Participant 3: Chris Jackson

GRADUATION YEAR 2020

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Focused

Chris always concentrated on his academic goals and used that to manage his health, sports, and career aspirations.

Participant Quote

"I took advantage of the time to actually focus on my studies. I did study accounting. It took a lot of time and effort into that. It's not something that you can just wake up, go to class, take a test and do."

Chris then stated the people and places he drew motivation from: *"A lot of studying, a lot of late nights in the library, and just having other people on you and wanting to see you do good was definitely extra motivation."*

Accountable

He created a mindset of accountability and firmly believed he was in control of creating specific outcomes.

Participant Quote

"... it's more than just about getting assignments done. Accountability, for me.... It's not about getting assignments done. Yes, you want to get your assignments done, but accountability is the process you take to get to that goal."

Intrinsically Motivated

He was able to generate internal energy to direct towards accomplishing his academic goals without a high degree of external motivation.

Participant Quote

"I wanted to have one of the top grades in the class. So, after a test, we got our grades back. I'd be like, "Hey, what did you get? What did you get?"

He then noted how that drove him to persist: *"And that actually motivated me to keep going, just like I'm on the basketball court in practice or whether in the weight room, I want to do just as good or even better as the next guy."*

Participant 3: Chris Jackson

GRADUATION YEAR 2020

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Executor, Passionate, and Persistent**
  "So, whatever I had to do to get there, I was going to do, whether I was studying for hours, having one-on-one meetings with my teachers to understand something a little bit better….."
- **Participant Quote**
  "So, whatever I had to do to get there, I was going to do, whether I was studying for hours, having one-on-one meetings with my teachers to understand something a little bit better….."

Chris ended his thought by stating showing up for himself and his academic goals: *"…I always wanted to answer every single question in the classroom. I raised my hand nonstop. It was more than just about being present there, present there for myself. "*

Participant 3: Chris Jackson

GRADUATION YEAR 2020

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"So, for me, the reason why I knew I was going to do college was because I wanted to do something no one else in my family did."

Chris continued by stating the life he wants for his future family: *"…my dad worked two different jobs. I didn't want that life for myself or my family. And I'm a big family guy….I always wanted to set up…for when I have kids…I want them to understand where we started."*

He ended by noting: *"…and how we got to where we are today and the work that we had to do, how this was not the norm. This is breaking the cycle. I wanted to break the cycle and give my family better opportunities."*

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"… it's what you put into it. So, it's about what steps you took to actually understand and grasp that material."

Chris continued by stating: *"…as long as you know you gave it your all, you took the steps that you needed to do to really understand that material and be able to talk about it and relate that material; that's academic success to me…."*

Occupation

Currently works for the U.S. Government.

Other Information

Completed Master's Degree: He completed a 4+1 program where he began some of his graduate courses during his senior year of college and graduated in 2021 with his master's degree from the same institution.

Participant 4: Nathaniel Cooper

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Nathaniel Cooper is a Black male between the ages of 21-23 years old. He graduated from a small-private (Christian) HSI within the Northeastern Region. Nathaniel identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2022 with a cumulative GPA of 3.4 and a computer science and mathematics degree. Also, the participant graduated towards the secondary stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. He is highly academically motivated and with a level of ambition to match. Nathaniel proved to be an inspired leader with an elevated desire to leave his mark regardless of the environment.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Peer Support**
   He spoke about the importance of having his peers during his undergraduate career.

2. **Personal Goals**
   Nathaniel uses his personal goals, such as aspiring to get a Ph.D. in the future, to drive his academic success.

3. **COVID-19**
   He was negatively affected by COVID-19, which created challenges in completing his academic work.

4. **Resources**
   Nathaniel cited the resources he could access as essential to his academic success.

Participant 4: Nathaniel Cooper

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Advocate

He served as a Resident Assistant on his campus and was an advocate for his residents.

Participant Quote

"In my class and my major, whatever it is, so I know what…Who they're talking about, what they're talking about, and what area exactly they need help with."

Confident

Nathaniel displays a healthy amount of confidence in himself which stems from his self-worth. His ability to reflect on his goals, current skills, and growth areas made him an excellent leader on his college campus.

Participant Quote

"In terms of self-worth, mine is very high. It's not like I think I'm better than you; it's just that …I've cultivated my-self-worth to the point where…I've never considered myself to be somebody …. Because I want to improve myself."

Role Model

He was a role model to his campus community through his leadership positions.

Participant Quote

"In terms of self-worth, mine is very high. It's not like I think I'm better than you; it's just that …I've cultivated my-self-worth to the point where…I've never considered myself to be somebody …. Because I want to improve myself."

Visionary

Nathaniel would envision his life the way he desires it in the future and intentionally plot out the next steps.

Participant Quote

"you know, I look at what am I doing now and think, what will I be doing in 10 years?"

Participant 4: Nathaniel Cooper

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"Yeah, I would say that I would have little goals, although my big goal is to get a Ph.D. and little goals…they had to meet them. It was to have balance, to live or have a well-balanced life."

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"… is how well you're doing, like, in school, whatever class you're taking. But I think it's truly… you're truly successful academically when you can blend it into everything else, you're doing in your life."

Occupation

Currently a student to get his master's degree.

Other Information

Future Graduate School Goals: Aspires to get his Ph.D. one day in Data Analytics or Cyber Security after completing a master's degree.

Participant 5: Abdul Hassan

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Abdul Hassan is a Black male between the ages of 23-25 years old. He graduated from a small-private PWI within the Southern Region. He graduated in 2019 with a cumulative GPA of 3.3 and a degree in Global Health and Global Development. Abdul is a student who demonstrates extreme commitment and resilience in the face of challenges, which significantly contributes to his overall success in life.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Participating in One of the Divine Nine-Black Fraternities:**
   For Abdul, this group was a significant factor in helping him to feel a sense of belonging on campus.

2. **Peer Support**
   Abdul spoke about the support that aided him in college.

3. **Community Service**
   Connecting with people from diverse backgrounds.

4. **Accountability Partner**
   He spoke about his girlfriend aiding him in his academic pursuits and helping to achieve success.

5. **Passing of a Loved One**
   Unfortunately, Abdul had to navigate the challenges of losing a close family friend during his sophomore year of college.

Participant 5: Abdul Hassan

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Goal-Oriented

He was actively planning and working towards his goals in college.

Participant Quote

"I felt like I was a very goal-oriented person, and when I came into school, I always knew that I wanted to do something around health."

High-Performer

Abdul is a highly driven individual who consistently pursues and executes his goals.

Participant Quote

"... I feel like I'm only doing 10%, like, I haven't reached my peak. So, it's like everything I'm doing now is only sort of preparing myself for later on."

Family Oriented

He spoke about maintaining close family connections (including close friendships).

Participant Quote

"...so, I think family.... Now, also say my friends as well to the friends that I did have throughout my college career; we were very close-knit."

Resilient

Abdul continued to find ways to push through disappointments and refocus on other opportunities and academic as well as personal goals.

Participant Quote

"...in between my sophomore and junior year, I applied to a lot of different internships, and I didn't get anything, so I was really hurt. And so, I ended up taking summer classes...it just gave me a little bit more motivation and felt like I can actually do it."

Participant 5: Abdul Hassan

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"To be able to support my family overall…For like our families, our environment, it's, like, you just know that there's a better life…."

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"…is not something that can be judged by any one person because academic success is personal…You have to know what is your best foot forward. And so, as long as I feel like I put my best foot forward, I feel like I have achieved academic success….."

Occupation

Currently a graduate student at an Ivy League institution pursuing his master's degree.

Other Information

N/A

Participant 6: Joe Rodriguez

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Joe Rodriguez is a Latinx male between the ages of 23-25 years old. He graduated from a small-private PWI in the Northeastern Region. Joe identified as a first-generation college student. His graduation year was 2019, with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 and a degree in Exercise Science. He was an active campus community member with an extroverted and adventurous personality. Joe conveyed an outstanding level of personal growth and development during his collegiate experience through his narrative.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Mother Having Already Attained a Master's Degree**
   He cited his mother having her master's as significant in modeling for him someone who successfully navigated collegiate life.

2. **Financial Challenges**
   Joe spoke of the difficulties he experienced with finances while growing up and financing his college education.

3. **Witnessing Extended Family Attain College Degrees**
   He revealed that witnessing his cousins graduating with degrees was a source of additional motivation for attaining one himself.

4. **Supportive Campus Community**
   Joe noted that his campus community members were, by and large supportive and aided in his academic success.

Participant 6: Joe Rodriguez

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Campus Leader

Joe founded a Latinx fraternity on his college campus.

Participant Quote

"I founded my Latino fraternity on campus. There was an opportunity for you out there, and there were ways to make you feel at home."

Prideful (Ethnic Pride)

He strongly connected to his ethnic identity, which became more apparent when transitioning to his PWI.

Participant Quote

"And I found my group of people on campus, and I was like, "Wow, this is where I feel way more comfortable." Once I made that self-discovery, I was just like, "Wow, this is who I am." I'm a straight-up, really Spanish kid on campus."

Resourceful

Joe produced funds by creating a GoFundMe to do an overseas fellowship in Greece during his senior year of college.

Participant Quote

"I stumbled upon a program to do a fellowship overseas in the hospitals in Greece, which was super dope. And going back to finances, this is this recurring thing."

He then discussed how he started a fundraiser for his fellowship: *"I started the GoFundMe to try to fund that for myself. And I did collect a good lump sum of money. It was at around 700 bucks or something, not too bad, but I needed 3000, 4,000 bucks."*

Participant 6: Joe Rodriguez

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Community Oriented**

  Joe navigated his college experience by seeking and building a community with similar cultural identities on campus.

- **Participant Quote**

  "I found out about the Latin dance group, which is called Ritmo Latino…. I was commuting, and I was like, "Man, we got that. We have this on campus."

Joe then stated how he identified with a fellow person from his ethnicity: *"I think I saw the video on Instagram of somebody reposting it. One of my friends, actually, who was Dominican. So, I identified with him in that sense."*

He ended by stating how he eventually got involved on-campus: *"…but I knew I couldn't join unless I was back on campus. So, the second I got back on campus, I was like, this is my thing because I was always that kid growing up at the family parties; I was always dancing."*

Participant 6: Joe Rodriguez

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"...being able to provide your own personal impact on the academics that you learned and how to relate that to yourself and how to shine that upon others....."

Joe concluded his thought by discussing the power of impact on others: *"It doesn't necessarily have to be a high GPA for me... it's really just what you learned and how you can positively impact somebody else."*

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"...it's always seeing my parents struggle financially to put me through school and knowing that my parents could have provided more for me, but financially they couldn't, or they wanted to...."

Joe ended by noting how finances motivated him: *"... just things of that nature drove me a lot throughout the school to just try to be academically driven .... So, I wouldn't be financially hindering myself like I saw them."*

Occupation

Medical Device Sales

Other Information

Future Aspirations: He wants to pursue an MBA.

Participant 7: Sully Woods

GRADUATION YEAR 2021

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Sully Woods is a Black male between the ages of 21-23 years old. He graduated from a small-private PWI within the Northeastern Region. Sully graduated in 2021 with a cumulative GPA of 3.22, a dual degree in Religion and Government, and a Legal Studies minor. Furthermore, he graduated one year after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sully served as a change agent at his institution, fighting against racial discrimination and inequity in his campus community. He tactfully addressed bias-related incidents and educated his community to promote cultural sensitivity and inclusion on his campus.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Experienced Racial Discrimination**
   Sully encountered numerous situations of racial discrimination while attending his PWI.

2. **Finding a Supportive Community**
   He navigated the challenges of a highly toxic culture towards students of color by seeking out peers he could trust and build community.

3. **College Mentors**
   Sully had mentors he confided in to help navigate the experiences of discrimination on campus.

4. **Participating in the College Lacrosse Team**
   He was passionate about the sport of Lacrosse and was an active leader within his team

Participant 7: Sully Woods

GRADUATION YEAR 2021

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Educator

He used moments of discrimination to speak against it and inform others about the effect and more significant implications of their actions.

Participant Quote

"...I coached with Harlem Lacrosse, really this intervention program within Harlem. And every year, we would bring a group of those students up to the college⁎ to see the school to play with us."

He went on to note: *"And on one of those years, we had a player that was calling them hoodlum saying that they might steal a bike and that they weren't good kids."*

Sully then discussed how he educated his teammate on the trauma of stereotyping and discriminating against a young child of color could cause: *"... having to intervene and explain the trauma in calling a middle school student a hoodlum... they're just there at a college... making the most out of that experience, and the people that are there to welcome them are calling them these derogatory terms."*

Empathic

On-campus, Sully's work came from a place of acknowledgment and resonated with the feelings of students of color on his campus.

Participant Quote

"We had an Athletes of Color Coalition that I ended up leading later on in my college⁎ career that was fundamental to our students feeling supported and letting them know that they were not alone in their experience."

Sully continued to discuss how he helped support athletes of color: *"And so, those were weekly meetings of students coming together and speaking about their experience, supporting one another and letting them know that they weren't alone in it."*

Participant 7: Sully Woods

GRADUATION YEAR 2021

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Faithful**

  He used his faith to overcome complex challenges.

- **Participant Quote**

  "...number one, my faith, just praying."

- **Transformational Leader**

  Sully was a student that sought to change the culture of racism and discrimination on his campus.

- **Participant Quote**

  "It was a COVID year; we weren't going to have a season. And so, I walked away from it my senior year to focus more on the school, being a student leader and doing DEI work within the school."

Participant 7: Sully Woods

GRADUATION YEAR 2021

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"I love lacrosse, but once I got into the school, it was not only about, hey, I got here because of lacrosse, it was about also finding an academic path…."

Sully concluded his thought by discussing his process for selecting a focus of study that motivated him: *"… an academic program that not only suited my strengths but also suited my passions and something that I really wanted to study."*

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"… thriving in an academic experience is the actual success of your schooling, but the emotional, physical, and social components as well."

Sully ended by discussing self-care and psychological safety: *"…feeling safe in interacting with other people, mentally feeling confident in yourself and the work that you're putting together, physically taking care of yourself and feeling safe in the setting that you're in."*

Occupation

He currently works as a high school Theology teacher.

Other Information

N/A

Participant 8: Attys Yrrab

GRADUATION YEAR 2017

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Attys Yrrab is a Black male between the ages of 26 and 28. He graduated from a large-public HBCU within the Mid-Atlantic Region. Attys identifies as a first-generation student. He graduated in 2017 with a cumulative GPA of 3.4 and a degree in Sociology. Through listening to Attys' narrative, he conveyed a sense of strength and dedication to his academic work and other collegiate commitments. Attys persevered through a couple of highly difficult challenges. Then he used his learned focus from participating in Track and expectations from his family to drive his academic success in college.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Participating in Track**
   He had to maintain a high GPA on the track team to keep his full-ride scholarship at his HBCU.

2. **Financial Challenges**
   Attys knew early on, based on conversations with his parents, that there would not be money for him to go to college. Therefore, he had to work jobs and attain scholarships.

3. **Coaches**
   He noted their continued support throughout his college career.

4. **Experiencing the Loss of Loved Ones**
   Unfortunately, Attys experienced the loss of a few loved ones within a short period, which momentarily affected his academic performance.

5. **Family Support**
   He attributes much of his success to the motivation and expectation from family members for him to succeed in contributing to the household.

Participant 8: Attys Yrrab

GRADUATION YEAR 2017

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Humility**

  Attys' trials and tribulations created humility and wisdom in navigating successes and failures in college.

- **Participant Quote**

  "...I had a lot of wins and a lot of losses. The wins definitely made me feel like there was so much more that I can do in the future. And the losses definitely kept me humble, allowed me to see that you could have it all one day and then lose it all the next."

  Attys then continued discussing his success and failures: *"... just understanding that every day's not going to be a good day, and nor is every day going to be a bad day...take your wins and see them as blessings. And then your losses, see them as lessons."*

- **Community Leader**

  He was an active member of his community by leading cleaning and improvement efforts.

- **Participant Quote**

  "I helped out a lot....in my local area... I forget the young man's name. The young man who was killed in the back of the van, and then the local* riots happened...a lot of us would go into the communities...."*

  Attys continued to discuss this moment in time during the Black Lives Matter Protests: *"... go talk to the students at the schools, help do community cleanups after the riots, just kind of be that big brother for some of those kids out there because a lot of them don't have those figures...."*

- **Strong-willed**

  Attys had a laser-focused mentality toward goal attainment.

- **Participant Quote**

  "...I was a football guy so that I would go to class, or I would go to. Even with track, you would go to classes banged up, limping. I even had surgery my senior year, and I was still going to class the day after surgery."

Participant 8: Attys Yrrab

GRADUATION YEAR 2017

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Observant**

  Attys uses his sociology degree to pick up on various social cues and individual behaviors.

- **Participant Quote**

  "...I'm actually managing a dental office. I'm getting ready for dental school, so I completely switched everything. But managing a dental office, you have to understand people. You have to be able to read things, read cues, and have social cues...."

Attys noted how he believes his major in sociology aids him in his current position: *"... Just everything I learned in the past definitely made this job easy. Just understanding what frustrates people...."*

Participant 8: Attys Yrrab

GRADUATION YEAR 2017

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"…I wasn't really expecting to go to college. So, I would say sports were the real guiding force for me because I was on the track team. And once I got to college, full ride at my HBCU⁎, coach let us know immediately….."

He continued by stating: *"… If you're below this GPA, you're not on the team." So, that was one of the things that really kept me going because I felt at peace when I was on the track…."*

Attys then discussed family support: *"Family definitely helped guide it also because being the first person in my family, I'm the youngest of eight brothers, and my parents are fresh off the boat……"*

The participant then ended by stating all the various forms of support in his life: *"So, I didn't want to let them down…my coaches, my teammates, family members, friends…kept me grounded and kept me motivated."*

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"Being able to reflect on all your experiences in college and see how they shaped you to where you are now. And that's how you should be able to define your success….."

He concluded by stating: *"…being able to see how your choices and everything led you to where you are, and if you're in a good place now, why are you in a good place? If you're in a bad place, where'd you go wrong? And that's how I measure it."*

Occupation

He currently works in the dental hygiene field.

Other Information

Future Aspirations: He wants to attend dental school.

Offered 17 Scholarships for Colleges: Attys recognized that he would need funds to enroll in college. He then utilized the sport of track to gain recognition and offers from 17 colleges to attend and become a team member.

Participant 9: Clark Wayne

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Clark Wayne is a Black male between the ages of 21-23 years old. He graduated from a large-public PWI within the Midwestern Region. Clark graduated in 2022 with a cumulative GPA of 3.4 and a degree in Business Administration. He graduated towards the secondary stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges of navigating a PWI that lacked a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, Clark drew upon his religious faith and leadership abilities to forge a path forward. Clark is well-versed in the history of his heritage and used it to create a positive concept of self and attain academic achievement.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Academic Challenges First Semester of College**
   He was academically dismissed due to a low GPA during the first semester of college. Then he appealed the decision and regained entry.

2. **Feeling A Sense of Othering**
   Clark spoke about his challenges with his White peers and being ignored or feeling as if he was not welcomed on campus.

3. **On-Campus Leadership Engagement**
   He was involved in a student-led advertising agency on campus. This specific organization traditionally had most of its members who identified as White, Greek Life, and communications majors. Clark was proud that he did not identify as any of those groups and was a Black male role model on campus.

4. **Family Role Models**
   Clark spoke about his parents' role modeling academic success. His father; has a doctorate, his mother; has a master's degree, and his siblings; both have bachelor's degrees.

Participant 9: Clark Wayne

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Musical Artist

He is a gospel artist that formed a group with his siblings.

Participant Quote

"...I also am a gospel artist; me and my siblings are, we have a group called The Wayne's. And so, we were singing at various places...."

Curious

He is a person who embraces the complexities of life and seeks out knowledge on how things work.

Participant Quote

"I am strong when I know everything about everything. So contextually speaking, I just want to know for no other reason than knowing...."

He next stated: *"So when I make decisions, I know. I can consider all these things. And so, I love context. I like knowing the why behind a lot of things."*

Religious

Religion was a focal point within his family and firmly informed their values.

Participant Quote

"...my ancestors, on my mom's side, we all went to church. On my dad's side, they all went to church, all very influential in their respective churches. And so, for me, it's also a family thing to be at church."

Participant 9: Clark Wayne

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Reverent Toward His Ancestorial Lineage**

  Clark was extremely open and respectful of discussing the complexities within his family's lineage and honoring the struggles of family members who were once enslaved.

- **Participant Quote**

  "And so that has shaped a lot about me because, in my own ancestry, we found that on my dad's side, they were never slaves."

Clark discussed his lineage on his father's side: *"As a matter of fact, the growing thought between the various historians on my dad's side of the family, the Wayne side of my family, they think that we owned slaves at one point. For various reasons, we never...going down through our oral history……"*

Clark continued by stating: *"…but none of my great-grandparents ever talked about any of their ancestors ever being slaves. Now, maybe that could have been a trauma response. Maybe they wanted to repress that part of their history."*

Clark next noted his mother's ancestral history: *"As opposed to my mom's side of the family, the Smith family, you can find them in every book. There were Smiths enslaved that I am related to, enslaved all over the State of [Location Redacted]."*

Clark concluded by discussing how this knowledge has shaped his identity: *"So now that has all shaped me because I have a history of the Black people in my family being overcomers, overcoming trials, tribulations, and adversity."*

Participant 9: Clark Wayne

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"My parents, in my household, everyone went to college. You went from high school to college; that was the expectation."

Clark concluded by noting his parents' expectations concerning attending college: *"I was expected to know what college I wanted to do by my senior year of high school…what I wanted to study, and…where I want to get my master's degree, I was expected to have researched that on my own."*

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"…it's not necessarily making the grade; it's learning something. I know so many people who make straight A's in every subject, and they don't have anything, any type of new knowledge, new thinking to show for it."

Occupation

He currently works in the Brand Management Field.

Other Information

Future Aspirations: He plans on attending a prestigious HBCU for his master's degree.

Participant 10: Eldrick Bryant

GRADUATION YEAR 2021

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Eldrick Bryant is a Black male between the ages of 22-25 years old. He graduated from a small-private PWI within the Northeastern Region. He graduated in 2021 with a cumulative GPA of 3.2 and a degree in Sociology. This participant also graduated one year after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Eldrick had an academically rigorous pre-college experience at his private boarding high school. He had a firm discipline towards his academic work and exhibited an ambitious attitude.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Pre-College Experiences**
   Eldrick attended schools that provided a focus on students striving for academic excellence, which set him up for collegiate success.

2. **Supportive Faculty**
   He noted that having faculty support aided him in navigating academic life.

3. **Peer Support**
   Eldrick cited creating a "close-knit" circle of friends as integral to his high school and college academic success.

4. **Family Role Modeling Success**
   He cited his mother having attained her master's degree and two older siblings as a roadmap for creating academic success in college.

5. **Participating in Basketball**
   Eldrick was a dedicated basketball team member and exhibited a competitive mindset that transferred to his academics.

Participant 10: Eldrick Bryant

GRADUATION YEAR 2021

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Competitive**

  He emphasized how developing a competitive mindset aided his academic journey.

- **Participant Quote**

  "Yeah, it definitely influenced my academic success in a number of ways; as I said, playing a collegiate sport is very taxing mentally and physically; it's very time-consuming. "

Eldrick continued by highlighting the impact his participation in sports had on his academics: *"So, in some regards, it does take away from school… if I wasn't an athlete, I probably would've been more successful in some areas academically. But at the same time…did influence my mindset."*

Eldrick continues by discussing his competitive nature: *"… I'm a competitive person…when I know that I'm taking class with my roommates, with my friends, having that competitive drive, seeing them do well…."*

He continues by stating his mentality towards his high-performance mindset: *"…I just want to do as well, or even better if I can, but then also being on a team, having that ability to kind of stick it through together…."*

Finally, he noted how he and his peers got through a class: *"…if we're taking a class together, making sure that we're both doing the necessary things to get through the class."*

- **Committed**

  During his high school years, allocated and consciously spent his time improving his basketball performance.

- **Participant Quote**

  "…I was very committed to basketball at that time… at that time, I definitely was trying to get to the next level."

The participant continued to state what he did to pursue his love and commitment to basketball: *"So, a lot of my summer experiences were taken up by playing basketball, traveling, doing those types of things……"*

Participant 10: Eldrick Bryant

GRADUATION YEAR 2021

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Strategic Decision-Maker

Eldrick made intentional decisions regarding his academic career and what he wanted from that experience.

Participant Quote

"... coming into making that transition to a private school, being at a public school...I probably wasn't challenged enough myself. And that's why I made that decision to move on from a public school."

Relational Leader

Eldrick focused on bringing people together during his collegiate experience, other students of color, to aid in their life on-campus.

Participant Quote

"... it was all about relationships. I think that's what it comes down to it; at the end of the day, it's the relationships that influence everything. I've seen many students who look like me, who didn't make it all four years at my undergraduate institution⋆."

He then noted the power of being interdependent: *"I know what I can do academically...at the end of the day, there's always going to be challenges.... Challenges are only harder to deal with when you try to deal with them alone."*

Eldrick next discussed the importance of forming relationships early on: *"And so, if you can build those relationships early with people who truly understand you and they don't have to look like you. Luckily for me, I did find people who look like me...finding people who look like you are probably more privy to understand your experiences...."*

He ended his thought by stating relationships with people can come from all backgrounds: *"...because they probably share many of the same experiences, but relationships come in all shapes and sizes and in many different faces and colors."*

Participant 10: Eldrick Bryant

GRADUATION YEAR 2021

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"So, I think the idea of college; it was never a question… Mentally, I knew that I was going to go to college. So, when it got to that point, it was just a matter of, okay, where do I want to go? There was no discussion of, oh, hey, should I go to college?"

Eldrick then discussed his journey in discovering his motivation to attend college: "Okay, I need to figure this out for myself. And I know my parents are right there with me because they expect me to go to college just as much."

He ended by noting how he viewed attaining a college degree: "But then also, as I mentioned, I played basketball, and wanting to prolong my basketball career as long as possible…I always wanted to play at the next level, so I knew that meant attending college as well."

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"Yeah, my personal definition of academic success, I would really say, for me personally, being just proud of what I was able to accomplish and where I think for me knowing that I graduated from my specific college."*

Eldrick then noted the challenging institutions he attended: *"For me personally, I know that I have attended a lot of challenging institutions, from going to a private high school to going to my college*….."*

Eldrick then delved into the significance of attending his specific institution: *"…I know people who graduated with a 2.8, but at the end of the day, we all graduated from the same institution. We all went to my college*. And at the end of the day, that's something to be proud of…."*

Eldrick ends this section by highlighting his belief in "what matters" regarding his college experience: *"What matters at the end of the day is that I graduated from this particular college. And for me, that shows that I was able to push through all the challenges academically, personally, athletically……"*

Occupation

Eldrick currently works in the Finance field.

Other Information

N/A

Participant 11: Myers Lee

GRADUATION YEAR 2017

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Myers Lee is a Black male between the ages of 26-28 years old. He graduated from a medium-public PWI within the Northeastern Region. He graduated in 2017 with a cumulative GPA of 3.1. The participant attained a degree in Computer Science and Computer Security and minors in Math and Spanish. Myers demonstrated adaptability and created a healthy inner dialogue that aided him in achieving his academic goals.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **College Mentors**
   Myers described two of his faculty mentors on- campus as: "...they were like moms away from home....."
2. **College Scholarship**
   He was awarded a scholarship in elementary school that covered the entire college tuition cost.
3. **Fear of Failure**
   Myers highlighted how the pressure of losing his scholarship and disappointing his parents acted as a driver toward academic success.
4. **Initial Transition to College**
   Myers noted his initial challenges with academically adjusting to college due to time management issues.
5. **Parental Support**
   His parents encouraged him to attend college starting at age ten.
6. **Peer Support Group**
   He had a strong peer support system that utilized the library and was academically productive.
7. **Pre-Collegiate Experiences**
   Myers had a robust set of pre-collegiate experiences that academically prepared him for college.

Participant 11: Myers Lee

GRADUATION YEAR 2017

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Academically Gifted

Myers was placed in an academically gifted program in grade school.

Participant Quote

"I got moved into the mentally gifted program in third grade, so from then to fifth grade, they talked about college."

Deliberate Creator

Myers intentionally focused on his academics in grade school to ensure his future college enrollment.

Participant Quote

"Yeah, I would say the pressure definitely came on more in high school, but it was always there from when I was 10 to 18."

Focused

He developed a deep focus on his academic work in college.

Participant Quote

"My friends were also, especially towards the end, they were big on going to the library and stuff like that. We would spend hours in there just, I guess, utilizing everything around me……"

Studious

He developed a deep focus on his academic work in college.

Participant Quote

"My friends were also, especially towards the end, they were big on going to the library and stuff like that. We would spend hours in there just, I guess, utilizing everything around me……"

Participant 11: Myers Lee

GRADUATION YEAR 2017

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

Myers had the desire to attain a well-paid job.

Participant Quote: Myers is referring to a scholarship he was awarded early on in grade school and the affordability of college: *"I think it was just not wanting to fail and being able to say that I had this opportunity, and I took full advantage of it and used it because of the scholarship I had…."* Myers next noted the process for maintaining the scholarship: *"…you had to keep up your grades throughout middle school, high school, you had to do community service, you had to write a letter every year telling them what you've been up to, stuff like that."*

He ended by stating: *"I did all that, and I was awarded the scholarship when I turned 18… That's the only school I applied to because this was basically…It was either I got the scholarship and went to school, or I was probably going to have to find another route."*

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"… anytime you feel like you've learned something that you feel like you can…teach somebody something or to do it professionally and gain money. It doesn't have to necessarily be through school…."

Myers ended by stating: *"… being able to take some knowledge and then apply it, either teaching somebody or using it in your own life or using it to get money or however you can……"*

Occupation

He works in the field of Software Development.

Other Information

Future Aspirations:

-**Master's Degree:** He is considering attaining a master's degree.

-**Entrepreneurship:** Myers aspires to build a business in the coming years related to his career field.

Participant 12: Steve Hamlet

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Steve Hamlet is a Latinx male between the ages of 22-25 years old. He graduated from a large-public PWI within the Southern Region. Steve identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2022 with a cumulative GPA of 3.3 and a degree in Mechanical Engineering with, Minor in Entrepreneurship. This participant graduated towards the secondary stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. Steve had an extraordinary amount of perseverance over highly challenging circumstances. He expertly navigated obstacles presented by COVID-19, housing, and food security.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Academic Rigor in High School**
   Steve's high school had high expectations for completing academic work. The high school had students complete assignments that focused on writing skills, critical thinking skills, networking with community leaders, and collaboration with others.

2. **External Wrap-Around Support Program**
   He attended a program that began in middle school and continued throughout his collegiate career, which helped boost his academic and professional skills, such as resume building.

3. **Financial Concerns**
   Steve had issues with housing security during his college experience. He ended up staying on friends' couches until he could purchase a house.

4. **Teaching & Mentorship**
   He instructed and mentored students participating in his external support program.

5. **Parental Involvement**
   Steve's parents championed the idea of attaining a bachelor's degree.

6. **Pre-Collegiate Leadership Engagement**
   He was involved in programs such as the Boy Scouts of America, which he underscored as a vital part of his ability to lead others and direct his future goals.

Participant 12: Steve Hamlet

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Enterprising**

  Steve was committed to creating financial abundance and sought avenues, such as real estate investing, to pursue that goal.

- **Participant Quote**

  "I want to be a real estate investor, and I wanted to learn the game, but I didn't know where to start. So, I thought the best place to start is at the real estate agent level."

- **Fervent**

  Steve exhibited a high degree of intensity, belief, and action in creating a future life that would look vastly different from his current circumstance.

- **Participant Quote**

  "Yeah, I had to be really organized. My day started off by driving 40 minutes…where the school was located to go showcase houses."

Steve continued expressing what his life was like during college. He discussed balancing academics with his real estate job: *"And then I would come back, I would drive…would showcase one or two houses, come back and then go to work."*

He continued by stating: *"And then I'd leave work early to go to class, and then from after class I'd go back 40 minutes away to go showcase houses to then finally come home past 8-9 o'clock, and that's when I'd do all of my work."*

Steve concluded by stating the result: *"And I just repeated that same process for six months until I finally closed on a contract."*

Participant 12: Steve Hamlet

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Leader**

  Steve mentioned several pre-college experiences tied to the Boy Scouts of America that provided him with leadership skills that he attributes to his overall academic success.

- **Participant Quote**

  "It's basically… a boot camp for leaders of… leaders… leadership core in the Boy Scouts and if you can go through this course and learn all… all of their objectives…."

  Steve continued to recount his opportunity to lead others: *"…they gave me the opportunity to…have my own team of leaders…..I was able to be a patrol leader of leaders…."*

- **Spiritual**

  He frequently drew upon his faith and spiritual community on his college campus to overcome challenges.

- **Participant Quote**

  "…I think it was Chi Alpha campus ministry. Because they kept me growing as a man and growing spiritually."

Participant 12: Steve Hamlet

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"…what kept me going, personally, was the vision, the position that I put myself in, which is higher than my current living con…standard…."

Steve concluded by discussing goals for his future family: *"And that is not where I intend to stay……So, what was driving me was my future family and the position that I see myself."*

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"…if you set out your goal and you met it, that's academic success. Whether that's…you're shooting for all A's, or you're shooting just to pass, if you met it, I'd say that's academic success."

Occupation

He works as a Business Analyst.

Other Notes

N/A

Participant 13: Leroy Casanova

GRADUATION YEAR 2020

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Leroy Casanova is a Black male in the age range of 24-27. He began his collegiate journey at a small-private PWI in the Northeastern Region. Leroy then transferred to an HBCU in the Mid-Atlantic Region. He graduated from the HBCU in 2020 with a cumulative GPA of 3.0. Leroy attained a degree in Sports Management with a concentration in Marketing. He graduated towards the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leroy is an authentic leader who is passionate about his marketing field and has been a mentor to others within the Black community.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **College Bridge Program**
   Leroy had self-selected to attend the college bridge program. The program allowed him to acclimate to college before officially starting his first year.

2. **Faculty Mentorship**
   He stated the faculty would go the extra mile and build strong rapport at his HBCU.

3. **Attending a PWI & Learning to Navigate White Spaces**
   For the first part of his bachelor's degree, he attended a PWI. While at the PWI, he learned how to adapt to and navigate White spaces.

4. **Transferring to an HBCU**
   He stated the HBCU helped him feel a strong sense of community and educators who were extremely approachable and accessible.

Participant 13: Leroy Casanova

GRADUATION YEAR 2020

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Authentic Leader

Leroy intuitively understood how to bring his authentic self to the surface and leveraged it to his advantage.

Participant Quote

"I know I can be in a white space, be comfortable, be my authentic self, and shine, and outwork them. I can be in the black community, still be my authentic self, and still be down, quote-unquote, down."

Leroy then stated how he knew he could balance multiple roles and still be successful: *"I can do business, whole programs, whole services like projects, and tutor kids, and play football, and do all this stuff, and still succeed."*

High-Performance Mindset

As a fraternity president at his college, he was the type of student to perform at a high level by bringing excellence to the environments he which he engaged.

Participant Quote

"... I have a standard to uphold in that sense, as well as being successful on the organization-business standpoint, as well as my academic success."

Thoughtful and Understanding

Leroy took time to respond and understand another person's perspective before engaging in a dialogue.

Participant Quote

"I had a teammate who was really, I think he was the vice president or the president of the Republicans group for my old college. And so, we literally had a whole debate, not even debate...."*

Leroy then explained how he successfully navigated the conversation: *"And he just started going on a whole rant about how Trump is great. And I'm just like, "I can't agree with you, but I see where you..." Feel like I can understand."*

Participant 13: Leroy Casanova

GRADUATION YEAR 2020

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Mentor**

  He displayed a strong ability to provide others with guidance and support.

- **Participant Quote**

  "Going back to being a tutor, seeing that I was successful working with children in a lower-income neighborhood, that gave me a sense of pride."

  Leroy continued by discussing his motivation: "...that just gave me a sense of, "You know what? I'm doing something that's supposed to be motivating these kids....."
  Leroy ended by noting: "...made me feel like I'm giving back to those kids. I'm not from here; this ain't my quote-unquote hood, but I'm dealing with the same type of kids that I deal with back at home....."

Participant 13: Leroy Casanova

GRADUATION YEAR 2020

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

His ultimate concern was his ability to stand with students with specific racial or financial privileges and perform multiple roles well.

Participant Quote: *"Again, it was just really a motivation because I know what I'm capable of. I'm confident in myself already."*

Leroy noted the difference between him and his affluent peers: *"I'm secure in myself, but now it's just, all right, I'm going up against, again, a lawyer kid, doctor kid, the BMW M3 kid."*

Leroy ended by stating where his confidence came from: *"Come on. I don't have a car. I didn't even have my license, probably at that point.....That's my type of motivation, that's my type of confidence, that's my driving force...."*

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"Really applying yourself and striving for whatever, academically, you want to do.... Doing whatever is possible to deem yourself successful."

Occupation

He works in the Media and Advertising Field.

Other Notes

Academic Scholarship: He had an academic scholarship to attend his first institution, a small private PWI.

Future Aspirations: Leroy would like to become a Chief Marketing Officer of a Fortune 500 company.

Participant 14: Pedro Rivera

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Pedro Rivera is a Latinx male within the age range of 23-25 years old. He moved from Puerto Rico to the U.S. to attend a small private (Catholic) PWI. Pedro graduated with a degree in Sport Management in 2019. Ultimately, he excelled academically at his institution while being a committed member of his college's baseball team. Pedro served as a highly adaptable leader who could forge a new life away from being in close proximity to his tight support systems.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Adjusting to Culture Stateside**
   He had to find connections to new people, the pace of speech, etc.
2. **Connection and Support from Family**
   He cited that maintaining communication and receiving communication, empathy, and support from his family at a distance was essential.
3. **Hurricane Maria and the Impact on Family**
   Pedro was temporarily living in the uncertainty of not knowing the well-being of his family. The lack of his family's safety due to the hurricane hurt his academics.
4. **Parental Influence**
   He stated that his parents were planting the seed of college and beginning to encourage a college-going mentality around age six.
5. **Participation in Baseball**
   He continued to play baseball in college and stayed committed to improving. He also used it, at times, as a way to cope with life stressors (for example, Hurricane Maria).
6. **Support from Baseball Coaches**
   Pedro cited receiving mentorship and support from his coaches during difficult times.

Participant 14: Pedro Rivera

GRADUATION YEAR 20...

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Committed

He consistently worked on a goal or obligation to attain the end purpose.

Participant Quote

"I think I work hard enough to do all of those things and get to where I am."

Creator

He demonstrated the ability to have a thought and then research, intentionally plan, and eventually realize the initial idea into their reality.

Participant Quote

"I really want to be involved in baseball....." I really want to work in baseball." And then now what I do now, I coach for the baseball team, the college baseball team...."

High-Performance Mentality

Pedro had the mindset of clearing obstacles and barriers in pursuing his goals.

Participant Quote

"You got to do what you got to do in terms of succeeding."

Self-Reliant

Pedro, from an early age, ensured he could provide for not only himself but his family members. He then went on to apply the ability to be self-reliant during college.

Participant Quote

"And that was the biggest thing for me when I went to college, to be here by myself. It's like, I don't have my parents here with me. I don't have family here....."

Pedro discussed how he had to adjust to living on his own: *"... I don't have the luxury of, "Okay. I can just go home this weekend and eat mom's cooking....." I had to cook for myself. I had to do my laundry. I had to basically do everything for myself because that's what it was."*

Participant 14: Pedro Rivera

GRADUATION YEAR 20...

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"Okay, I know this is what you got to do for our family. Give us better stability financially." But at the same time, I was just like, "Okay, I need to start making decisions and start working in a certain way."

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"...academic success is somebody that excels in the classroom, but more importantly to me is they're emotional and ethical."

He then stated the responsibility one has through acquiring knowledge: *"...the people who do that in college and really get to know and then understand, yeah, there's more than knowing stuff. The power that comes with it and the responsibility that comes with it....."*

Occupation

He works as a College Administrator and Assistant Baseball Coach.

Other Notes

Intentions for Graduate School: Pedro intends to enroll in a master's degree program within the next two years to further his education.

Participant 15: Mike Lowery

GRADUATION YEAR 2017

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Mike Lowery is a Latinx male between the ages of 27-29 years old. He graduated from a large-public PWI within the Northeastern Region. Mike identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2017 with a cumulative GPA of 3.2 and a degree in Biology with a concentration in Neuroscience. Mike displayed a high level of ambition and initiative during his undergraduate years and had deeply enriching academic experiences through both in-class and co-curricular activities.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **On-Campus Program for First-Generation Students**
   He was involved in a program to support first-generation college student's academic success.

2. **On-Campus Leadership Activities**
   Mike was involved in multiple activities that helped him feel connected to campus and motivated by specific groups of high academic achieving students.

3. **Medical Internship**
   He attended a three-summer-long medical internship that was a partnership between an IVY League institution and a medical hospital that provided an immersive experience through research, observation, mentorship, and class instruction.

4. **Staff Mentor**
   A staff member from the on-campus first-generation support program assisted with attaining his medical internship.

5. **Tutoring**
   Mike stated that he utilized tutoring to aid his academic success.

Participant 15: Mike Lowery

GRADUATION YEAR 2017

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Industrious

He was extremely focused and dedicated to his academic work.

Participant Quote

"I get tunnel vision sometimes. I think that's why people ask me for help sometimes because when I'm doing something and I can't figure it out, I zone in hard."

Intellectually Curious

Mike had a thirst for knowledge and an interest in learning more about his chosen field at the time.

Participant Quote

This quote is regarding Mike's experience interning at a hospital during his college experience— *"And I remember I was in the lab going to people's homes…. And I told them I wanted to do everything."*

Mentor

He was a volunteer and served as a mentor to youth with family members with cancer.

Participant Quote

"So, Camp Kessem, it's like a group of students. We fundraised every year to take kids to camp that have relatives that have cancer..."

Mike went on to discuss the impact of the experience: *"...it's like an empowerment type of thing where we're there for a week camping. We talk about all these feelings and how you're feeling, it's very emotional."*

Tenacious

He had a strong mindset and attitude toward addressing challenges.

Participant Quote

"... as a kid, I used to say, "Nothing's impossible…." Everything's possible; it might just be really difficult. But to say something's impossible means it can't be done, but if people are doing it, then it's possible."

Participant 15: Mike Lowery

GRADUATION YEAR 2017

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"My main thing was just I wanted to be different than my parents. I wanted to be educated, and I just wanted to be proud of myself."

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"… people tie it to their degree. I just tie it to how much I've learned. And it's not just education-wise, but just life because even life is about learning how to live…."

Mike ends by noting how education is a lifelong process: *"…my version of academic success is never-ending. It's just you have a list of successes. Not that you've reached the end of the success because when people think of academic success, they think about an end to something……"*

Occupation

He was a former grade school teacher.

Other Information

Post-Bachelor's Degree: Currently went back to school to attain a post-bachelor's degree in Software Development.

Lack of Encouragement from Parents for Attending College: His parents did not discuss or encourage attending college during his grade school years.

Participant 16: Trey Douglas

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Trey Douglas is a Black male between the ages of 24-27 years old. He graduated from a small private within the Southern Region. He graduated in 2019 with a cumulative GPA of 3.2 and a degree in Sociology. Trey is a well-accomplished scholar and an individual that demonstrates an abundance of curiosity for learning. During his undergraduate years, he held himself to a high standard and used his highly reflective nature to aid in successfully graduating with his bachelor's degree.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Community of High-Performers**
   He noted students were placed in specific residence halls based on their major.

2. **Glee Club**
   Trey was an active member of his Glee Club, which also meant creating a disciplined schedule to perform well academically.

3. **High Standards of Academic Excellence**
   He discussed how his college placed a major emphasis on being a high performer in every regard—academically, in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, and their chosen career paths.

4. **Parental Influence**
   The support and high expectations his parents had for his academic success contributed to his overall performance in college.

Participant 16: Trey Douglas

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Community Builder**

  Trey is an individual who prioritizes and thrives when he builds a supportive community around him.

- **Participant Quote**

  "I knew that I was in a space where I could succeed, that people wanted me to succeed. But I also knew that, like, I wasn't going to be left behind with people that were also rooting for me."

  Trey ended by noting the importance of his peer community encouraging him during college: *"So, even if the friends that I made did not graduate with me because of whatever circumstance that I would always have that community rooting for me….."*

- **Highly Driven**

  Trey is consistently pushing himself outside of his comfort zone and pushing his theoretical limits to attain success.

- **Participant Quote**

  "…but black folks are known for overcoming, like getting through hurdles, like we are known for making shit work."

  He ended his thought by quoting Malcolm X: *"Like they say… "Find a way or make one." Malcolm X, "By any means necessary." And like that is what continues to push me."*

Participant 16: Trey Douglas

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Introspective**
  He is adept at reflecting on his emotions and their impact on his growth and development.

- **Participant Quote**
  "... internalized homophobia, knowing that, like, because my parents in church and told me like, "God doesn't agree with gay people," and it's not okay for me to be gay.

Trey discussed his moments of introspection surrounding his sexual identity: *"I, in turn, hated myself and internalized what they were telling me by telling myself, "It's not okay to be gay... My college* was the only space where I could be queer and figure it all out in ways that I could not be growing up....."*

He then noted how he had to fight to find inspiration on his college campus concerning his sexuality: *"Where's my beacon of light? Where's my beacon of hope? Like, where's my Marsha P. Johnson, my James Baldman. Like, where are y'all at? And they were there... but I also had to fight to find them."*

- **Relentless**
  He conveyed an extremely determined and unyielding spirit toward achieving his academic and personal goals.

- **Participant Quote**
  "Like you have to get to the finish line no matter what, no matter how long it takes, no matter how hard it is, no matter how many counselors you have to go see....."

Trey concluded by underscoring his attitude toward goal attainment: *"...no matter how many friends you break up with, like no matter how hard it gets and you feel like you actually just want to go back home, you have to do that."*

Participant 16: Trey Douglas

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"But more specifically as a black gay man. And I didn't want to let myself down. I didn't want to let my ancestors down."

Trey ended by noting pushing himself for his parents: *"I certainly, after changing my major four times, didn't want to let my parents down…. It's almost as if you've worked so hard for something that you have to see it through."*

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"… following the path of one's own time and one's own clock. I think we… think that success has to look the same across the board, specifically academic success, and it doesn't."

He ended by noting his reasoning for wanting a second master's degree: *"…But like following the time of my own path, my own clock, my own rules, doing it my way is my definition of academic success."*

Occupation

He is a current graduate student at an IVY League institution pursuing his second master's degree.

Other Notes

Undergraduate Loan Payoff: The graduation speaker at Trey's HBCU announced that he was paying off all student loans for his undergraduate graduating class.

Participant 17: Martin Quinn

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Martin Quinn is a Latinx male between the ages of 25-27 years old. He graduated from a large-public PWI within the Northeastern Region. Martin identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2019 with a cumulative GPA of 3.15 and a degree in Financial Mathematics. Martin is an individual who eventually preserved by learning how to adapt to the difference in his unique learning style. Although he initially struggled to find his footing in college, he began actively participating in his academic success. He attained success by utilizing resources and embracing challenges.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **An Abundance of Time and Resources**
   He noted that compared to his friends, he did not have to stress over getting a job, housing, or financial resources due to his parents' support.

2. **Challenges with ADHD**
   The participant noted he sometimes had trouble with attention when reading course materials.

3. **Creating Bonds with Focused Students**
   Martin cited his ability to observe and develop friendships with peers that excelled academically, which helped him become accountable for his work helped.

4. **Environment**
   Martin stated his ability to stay in the library all day aided his academic success.

Participant 17: Martin Quinn

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Adaptable**

  Due to his ADHD, he had to find alternate studying methods and actively sought guidance.

- **Participant Quote**

  "... one major thing is like reading a certain paragraph or passage in a textbook or book, whatever, kind of pausing and asking myself what I just read and see if I can explain it."

Martin expressed the difference in his approach from high school to college: *"And also going to get extra help from my professors, it's something I never really did in high school, but I did in college....."*

- **Assiduous**

  He displayed the commitment and discipline to utilize the library to study and work on assignments consistently.

- **Participant Quote**

  "And I just started studying a lot, too, as well, going to the library all the time."

- **Calculated**

  After having difficulty during the beginning of his college experience (not enjoying his initial major, struggling academically, and lacking time management), he began to take specific steps toward his academic goals.

- **Participant Quote**

  "I was basically a lot more conscious with my decision-making, more geared towards career, talking to peers who were on similar paths and reaching out for help. Doing all of that helped."

Participant 17: Martin Quinn

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Self-Aware**
  The participant took time to self-reflect and understand that the learning strategies he was engaging in, and his lack of effort produced less-than-desirable outcomes.

- **Participant Quote**

  "...I was reflecting back after my sophomore year of high school and realizing I'm not doing very well at all. And then I had to focus better. And I just started taking it more seriously."

  He then expressed the shift in discipline when switching to community college from his first 4-year institution: "...in terms of college; it started getting a lot better for me once I went to community college, trying to reconfigure and see what I really wanted to do."

Participant 17: Martin Quinn

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"...Like, what else am I going to do when I'm 18? So, I don't really know an age, but I remember teachers mentioning college in middle school and knowing that's what I was going to do."

He ended by stating the general expectation to attend college he felt:
"So, it was never like, "Am I going to do it?" Nothing like that. And plus, I was always put in magnet schools. So, it was an expectation from everyone who attended those schools."

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"...it's intertwined with what you want to do. So, if you wanted to work in... academia, then academic success would mean high grades and all that, getting research and getting to know faculty."

He next discussed his views on attaining work outside of academia: "But if you wanted to get a job...as long as you're aware of what

Occupation

He is currently a student attaining a second bachelor's degree.

Other Notes

Attended a Boarding School for High School: He noted that his high school was academically rigorous yet *"a really great school."*

Attended Two Prior Institutions: One 4-year institution and the second a community college, before graduating from his third and final 4-year college.

Participated in Two Internships: One internship was conducting research, and the second was within his field, being an actuarial intern.

Participant 18: Lewis Fournier

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Lewis Fournier is a Latinx male between the ages of 26-28 years old. He graduated from a large-public PWI within the Northeastern Region. He graduated in 2019 with a cumulative GPA of 3.3 and a degree in Actuarial Science. Lewis was steadfast and endured a problematic grade school experience. He was intrinsically motivated to attain academic success. Lewis holds education in high regard and demonstrated that through his academic narrative.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Academic Support Program**
   He was involved in a program for students of color that supports students academically through resources such as tutoring and additional financial aid.

2. **Peer Support Systems**
   Lewis noted being around academically driven students with specific study regimens and aspirational goals.

3. **Smaller Classroom Sizes in College Major**
   He attributed his academic success partly to having fewer students in a class to be more engaged in learning.

4. **Study Environment**
   Lewis noted that studying in the library helped him to focus on his studies.

5. **Technological Resources**
   He stated being able to rent out a laptop for free for the semester.

Participant 18: Lewis Fournier

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Competitive

Lewis began to be competitive once he was surrounded by driven students.

Participant Quote

"...students that were in class were... very motivated. Competitive, like really smart, too. Having that... that... that atmosphere around you....."

He then noted how he had to rise to the occasion regarding his class performance: *"...of people who want to be successful, you just sort of have to be in the game as well. And also, play hard, so I mean... at least for me that's... what it did it."*

Emulous

Once Lewis found a peer group that would frequently utilize the library to study, he sought to emulate their success.

Participant Quote

"You start to look at other people, and... you get into this mentality of yeah like I want to do something similar....I also want to achieve something similar and things like that....."

Focused

He leveraged his peer relationships to help him become fixed on studying.

Participant Quote

"...a lot of my friends were people who would, you know, be at the library all the time... it was kind of like a pressure for you to also stay at the library and... keep studying....."

He ended by noting: *"that was one of the biggest reasons that also, like, allowed me to focus on my work, focusing on school and then focus on the things that I wanted to do."*

Participant 18: Lewis Fournier

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Sedulous**

  Lewis had negative pre-college experiences with overcrowding and violence at his high school. Later on in college, he still went through an iterative process of figuring out how to navigate his coursework.

- **Participant Quote**

  "And I would say that my high school… my high school didn't prepare me to go to college…. The department of education tried to close it down once because it was performing so bad….."

  He later stated: *"…once I figured out what I wanted to… do for my major, that's what sort of allowed me to sort of focus. And sort of tell myself… that's where I want to see myself in five years or 10 years."*

  Lewis ended by noting what drove him to spark his drive to succeed: *"…That actually allowed me to put in the work for completing the hours, and just prepare myself for a better life…. at first…it took… trial and error to…get used to a routine that worked……"*

Participant 18: Lewis Fournier

GRADUATION YEAR 2019

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"I guess you know what sort of came to me when applying to college was like okay, this is what's next, you know kind of like kindergarten then goes to elementary school to middle school and high school…."

Lewis then explained how he discovered his reason for attaining his degree: *"But once I figured out what I wanted to do as an undergrad for my… for my major, I guess that that's what sort of allowed me to sort of focus."*

He ended by stating what he wants out of life: *"And sort of telling myself okay, so that's where I want to see myself and like five years or ten years. That actually allows me to put in the work for completing the hours, and you know, just prepare myself better… for life."*

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"Academic success, I would simply say it's completing college… having an internship or…. And, you know, being able to, I guess, to get a job after you finish your… your major and getting a job in your actual major."

Occupation

Lewis is currently works in the Actuarial Science field.

Other Notes

N/A

Participant 19: Alex Ortiz

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Alex Ortiz is a Latinx male between the ages of 21-23 years old. He graduated from a large-public PWI within the Northeastern Region. Alex identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2022 with a cumulative GPA of 3.15 and a degree in Spanish with a Minor in Photography. Alex graduated towards the secondary stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. He was a leader who dedicated much of his time to forming significant connections with his peers. Furthermore, Alex was a creative student with an artistic eye that fueled his passion for photography.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **Family Support**
   Alex noted the importance of his family in aiding his academic success on several occasions and the close bond he has with them.

2. **Being a Resident Assistant**
   He noted this highly on his list of significant experiences that shaped his academic career and overall college experience.

3. **COVID-19**
   Alex noted his challenges with COVID-19, particularly around his mental health and how it affected his academic performance.

4. **Peer Support**
   Due to Alex's extroverted nature, he was able to make positive and lasting connections with many of his peers, which aided him in his academic journey.

Participant 19: Alex Ortiz

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Artistic

He is drawn toward producing original work and using his ability of creative expression.

Participant Quote

"...but definitely the photography and then working towards something tangible, like a book, which I actually have right here. Being able to hold my own book with the images I created is a very rewarding feeling."

Alex expressed how photography is a significant part of his life: "It also really pushed me to think of photography as more than just a hobby, as more than just a minor in photography, as potentially a career."

Steadfast

Alex was devoted to his craft and created a solid foundation through his focused efforts in his academic work.

Participant Quote

"... I look back, and I think like, "No, like I did this. I grinded for hours and hours to make sure I got this memorized for my test....."
Alex then noted how he realized his potential: "I put in the work, and I earned everything that I got. And perhaps dealing with imposter syndrome along the way, it filled me with doubt for myself and what my actual potential is...."

Participative Leader

He was a leader who liked to include the residents he oversaw as a Resident Assistant in decisions and build a strong rapport with each individual.

Participant Quote

"... the majority of these students are athletes. I used to be an athlete. I'm also really big on the teamwork mentality. Really big on collaborative efforts in groups."

Participant 19: Alex Ortiz

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Resourceful

Through his narrative, Alex demonstrated how he has learned to utilize what is around him and turn it into something meaningful or functional.

Participant Quote

"When you can make something with little to perhaps nothing, well, imagine when you've got it all....."

Alex then provided examples of his resourcefulness: *"I know how to get by with almost nothing. I know how to get by and maybe make like a killer, I don't know, diorama for my fifth-grade class presentation, or science fair, whatever...."*

He ended by stating: *"... and only use like a shoelace, like a cut-up carton of milk and a random box that I picked up off the street. It doesn't matter. I'm going to find it, and I'm going to find the things and give it purpose."*

Participant 19: Alex Ortiz

GRADUATION YEAR 2022

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"The last thing I can say is like I remember bursting into tears on my day of graduation because, again, I had achieved my dream, but that's not the reason why I started crying."

He discussed how all of his family coming together created an impactful moment for him: *" I was there, and I saw my mom's side of the family, and I also saw my dad's side of the family, and we took what is actually my first real family portrait….."*

Alex continued by saying: *"…this is my worlds colliding, becoming one. This is my family, my true family portrait….."*

He ended by stating the significance of that memory: *"… This is my family that supported me with my dream. This is my family that came to this country and gave it their all so that I could be here and give back to them."*

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"…I think it is composed of two things, right? One, if you've retained the knowledge and you know how you can apply it to various aspects in your life outside of just studying for an exam…."

Alex next noted how success equates to finding purpose: *"…I want to say like if you're happy because I feel like I found academic success once I figured out what my purpose in this life is with photography. I want to dedicate my life to photography."*

Alex ended by stating the importance of self-discovery through learning: "… retaining the knowledge that you've learned and that you've been exposed to in these environments, learning how to apply them in your direct life, and then also discovering something. Like learning about yourselves through your time studying….."

Occupation

He recently graduated and searching for employment in his field.

Other Notes

Future Aspirations: Alex wants to attend an IVY League institution known for its exceptional photography program.

Participant 20: Daniel Vazquez

GRADUATION YEAR 2021

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

Daniel Vazquez is a Latinx male between the ages of 22-24 years old. He graduated from a small-private PWI within the Northeastern Region. Daniel identified as a first-generation college student. He graduated in 2021 with a cumulative GPA of 3.48 and a degree in Mechanical Engineering. This participant graduated one year after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Daniel is an individual that exudes humility. He had drawn upon the strength of his family along with his respectful and appreciative attitude to attain academic success.

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES IMPACTING ACADEMICS

1. **External Pre-Collegiate Program**
   Daniel discussed an external program he was a part of beginning in middle school throughout his educational career that provided wrap-around support services and helped him attain academic success.

2. **Family Support**
   He greatly attributes his drive to achieve to his family and the support they provide.

3. **Financial Challenges**
   Daniel discussed the impact of being in a low-socioeconomic status on his family and education.

4. **Peer Support Systems**
   He attributes part of his success to being surrounded by motivated individuals who kept him moving toward his goals.

5. **Parental Influence**
   Daniel noted how his parent's modeling of a strong work ethic helped him to succeed.

Participant 20: Daniel Vazquez

GRADUATION YEAR 2021

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Academic

Daniel enjoyed the process of learning and exploring the sciences.

Participant Quote

"I know that I'm an academic. I like taking classes. I can do math and science, so I owed it within my scope of being able to achieve this degree of engineering."

Aspiring

He is an aspiring individual that has been future-oriented and envisions attaining specific goals as a source of motivation.

Participant Quote

"I felt like there were times growing up where I was like, "If only I had this, I would be able to get out of or get into something else." But it was like, "Okay. Well, that means that I have to kind of push myself to be able to achieve what I want, so I can get what I want……"

High-Achiever

He was a student motivated to be a high academic achiever by the drive to support his family financially.

Participant Quote

"I think in my own wanting to be a high achiever, I know that I am someone whose belief is that if you have the ability to do something, you should."

Daniel next discussed providing for his family: *"… I felt like I was within my own ability to go to school, and to achieve this, I knew that I'd be able to, if I put my energy in and self into it……"*

Participant 20: Daniel Vazquez

GRADUATION YEAR 2021

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- **Reverent**

  He is respectful of his parent's hard work. Daniel uses that knowledge as fuel to provide for his family's future legacy to achieve his goals.

- **Participant Quote**

  "...I had been pushing to try and get to this achievement since I was in the sixth grade....I think challenging myself ...was always based on the idea that my parents were hard-working....."

Daniel ended by delving deeper behind his reasoning for being a high-achiever: *"Hey, I am now at the forefront of my lineage per se, and I have achieved this that maybe none of my previous ancestors have."*

Participant 20: Daniel Vazquez

GRADUATION YEAR 2021

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ultimate Concern: Reason for Degree Attainment

"...being able to go to school and have enough backing to become even more educated and pursue...more complex jobs, which would eventually bring some type of stability into my family."

Participant's Definition of Academic Success

"I think it's learning and experiencing not just in the school setting but just learning, becoming more, and growing. Going from, I guess, a lower state to a higher state, more like an enlightened state because everyone's educational journey is different....."

Occupation

He works in the engineering field.

Other Notes

N/A

APPENDIX J: DISSERTATION SUMMARY

Narrative-Driven Educational Practice: Guiding Principles for Academic Success of Black and Latinx Male Collegians

Christopher T. James

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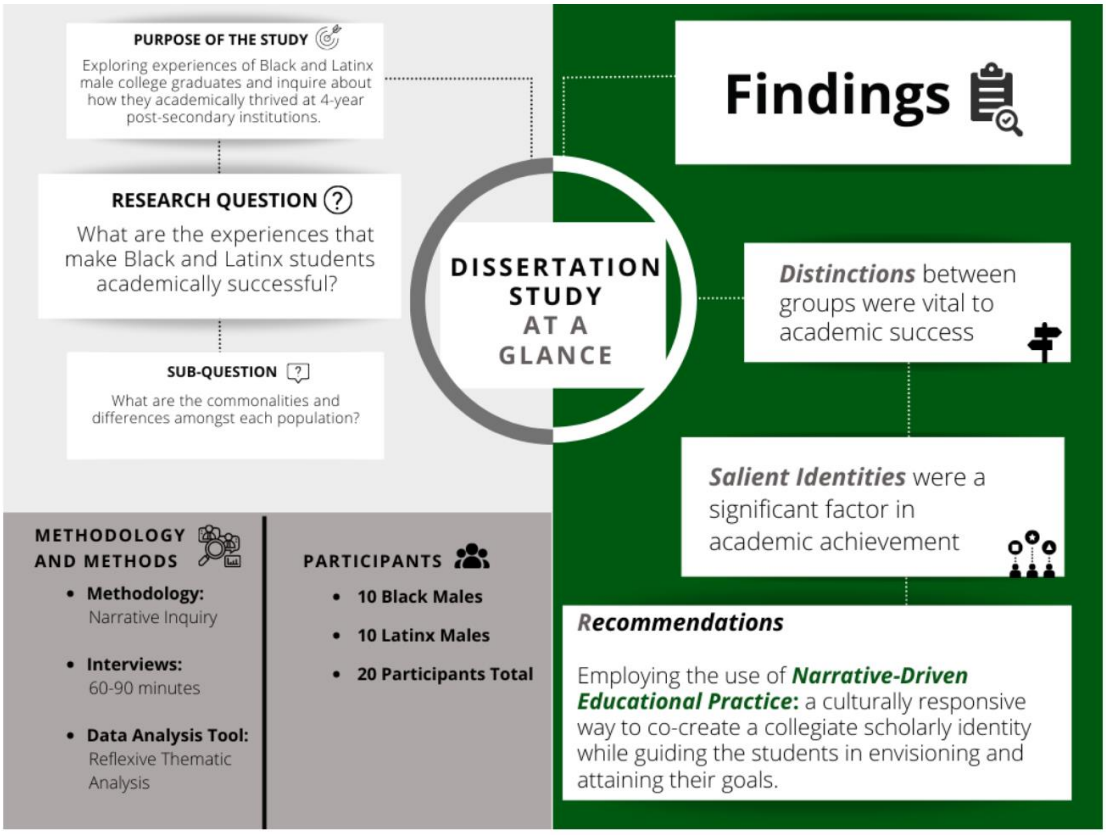
DISSERTATION SUMMARY

Narrative-Driven Educational Practice: Guiding Principles for Academic Success of Black and Latinx Male Collegians

Christopher T. James

Dissertation Topic: Academic Success of Black and Latinx Male Collegians at 4-Year Institutions

STUDY AT A GLANCE



GOALS FOR THE DISSERTATION STUDY

1. Continue the dialogue, which unpacks significant collegiate experiences of Black and Latinx males
2. Provide a counter-narrative to deficit-oriented literature and a deeper understanding of the complex identities of Black and Latinx male collegians
3. Empower educators with a culturally responsive approach on how to aid them along their collegiate journeys

Key Terms

Academic Achievement: A student's ability, after instructor evaluation, to achieve high academic marks at their undergraduate institution (Howard, 2020).

Anti-Racism: An individual or group critically examining how current institutional systems create racist and inequitable environments. Harmful methods, narratives, perspectives, and policies are frequently perpetuated by agents within the system. Hence, requiring reflection on how to enact meaningful adjustments and advocacy to produce change (Harvard University, 2023; Mericle, 2020).

Academically Successful: students who successfully navigate their undergraduate tenure by scoring a 3.0 GPA and above and participating in extracurricular and co-curricular activities that enrich their collegiate experiences (Harper, 2008).

Culturally Responsive: An individual who has the intellectual and emotional capacity to engage in the ongoing process of acquiring more knowledge and understanding their culture and the culture of others (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019).

Deficit Thinking/Narrative: Putting the onus of academic success or lack thereof on the student rather than the educator or institution. Furthermore, it holds the student accountable for not having access to fundamental resources, lack of familial or peer support, and low drive or performance (Valencia, 1997).

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS RELATED TO DISSERTATION STUDY

QUESTION #1: WHY STUDY THESE POPULATIONS?

These populations are rapidly becoming a large demographic that educators serve, and institutions must understand how these students persist. ***Educators can learn from Black and Latinx male students' narratives*** to engage in culturally sensitive interactions, culturally appropriate references, and approaches these populations engage in to succeed.

QUESTION #2: HOW DOES THIS STUDY ADD TO THE EXISTING LITERATURE?

This study has provided various ***new avenues to explore deeply***; the successful academic engagement **of Black and Latinx male collegians in the context of their salient identities**. This study specifically gave a brief ***insight into both populations in the wake of major national and global events***—the Black Lives Matter Movement and the COVID-19 pandemic. ***Black and Latinx male collegians that embody their salient identities*** is an avenue that can be examined further when attempting to cultivate a new scholarly identity within a collegiate environment in a culturally responsive fashion.

QUESTION #3: WHAT IS NARRATIVE DRIVEN-EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE?

Narrative-Driven Educational Practice [NDEP] was constructed based on this study's findings as ***a culturally responsive approach to academically support Black and Latinx male collegians***. NDEP is a student-centered approach that helps re-center Black and Latinx students in their collegiate experience. NDEP equips educators with a culturally responsive way to ***co-create a collegiate scholarly identity while guiding the students in envisioning and attaining their personal, academic, and future career goals***. **This practice emphasizes the following:**

1. Identifies Salient Identities. Through actively listening to students' lived experiences, educators identify their salient identities (e.g., racial, ethic, religious, and scholarly identities).

2. Discovers Past and Present Experiences. Educators take time to discover students' past and present lived experiences.

3. Facilitates the Process of Envisioning Goal Attainment. The educator then uses the knowledge of the students' lived experiences to assist the student with the facilitation of generating potential outcomes. Then they work with the student on co-creating a future road map aligned with their personal, academic, and future career goals.

4. Acknowledges Yet Not Assumes Based on Race and Ethnicity. NDEP asks educators to recognize and acknowledge the students' racial and ethnic identities (understanding how different aspects of their experiences are affected by those backgrounds). However, keeping those identities in the foreground while learning what identities speak to the learner the most. This approach strongly recommends educators check in with themselves and reflect on any biases that may harm the students psychologically.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS RELATED TO DISSERTATION STUDY

QUESTION #4: WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT NARRATIVE DRIVEN-EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE?

NDEP emphasizes ***re-centering the Black and Latinx male collegians in their experience through their past, present, and future narratives*** versus feeling excluded by the larger community or educational system. A narrative-driven approach ***allows educators to be culturally responsive and learn about their complex identities and how they intersect***. Frequently, these male collegians feel unseen, disregarded, and stereotyped. Thus, focusing on their stories allows the institution and educators to acknowledge their experiences and guide their future achievement. Another way NDEP is unique is the focus on ***helping the student to envision the desired outcome***. As some students may struggle to envision a life beyond the environments they were raised, ***this process allows students to use visualizing future successful outcomes to motivate high-academic performance.***

NARRATIVE-DRIVEN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO ACADEMICALLY SUPPORT BLACK AND LATINX MALE COLLEGIANS

Phases	Core Values	Guiding Principles	Description
1	Reflect	**Critically Reflect on Your Identities, Privileges, and Pedagogy**	Educators' ability to ***critically reflect*** on their identities, privileges, and pedagogy before guiding students is a vital first step. Taking time to reflect on how one's worldview and lived experiences shape interactions with students is essential to intentionally co-create with the student a plan to produce successful outcomes. Critical Reflection also allows the educator to plan intentionally on building rapport with the student.
2	Listen	**Listen to Student's Past Academic and Personal Narratives**	Students arrive in collegiate settings with an extensive personal history (both in and out of the classroom) that profoundly informs their interactions with coursework and ability to perform. Educators' willingness to actively ***listen*** and learn about aspects such as: past academic successes, failures, obstacles, academic habits, and views on their scholarly identity can produce a wealth of information.
3	Discover	**Discover Student's Salient Identities and Personal Beliefs**	Identifying the salient identities of a student can help the educator understand the various facets of their identity. Educators can then ***discover*** how they utilize those identities to navigate different environments and attain academic success.
4	Engage	**Authentically Engage in Open Communication and Discussing Your Narrative**	Educators deciding to ***engage*** with a student authentically allows for a sense of trust to be formed. Openly sharing appropriate stories from one's past teaches the students lessons and projects a sense of transparency and approachability.
5	Introduce	**Introduce Student to Possibilities**	When educators ***introduce*** a student to various academic and career-related possibilities, it produces knowledge of potential educational and career paths. Equipping a student with the knowledge of "what's out there" may spark motivation and give them a goal worth going after.
6	Envision	**Envision Student Future Successful Outcomes**	Providing detailed examples for the student to ***envision*** what their life could look like beyond college and then bringing it back to the specific actions they need to start during college aids them in processing the steps required to achieve the life they ultimately seek.
7	Immerse	**Immerse Student in Experiences Concerning Ultimate Goals**	Assisting a student with gaining rich leadership experiences through promoting ***immersive*** and dynamic situations allows them to practice skills such as: soft-skills, time management, discipline, and focus that can cultivate the necessary skills for academic achievement.

NARRATIVE-DRIVEN QUESTIONS FOR BLACK AND LATINX MALE COLLEGIANS

This first set of questions are meant to These next set of questions are meant to prompt the students to state their **salient identities:**

Identifying Salient Identities

	Level 1 Questions
1	What are the aspects of your identity that you (1) are most proud of, (2) what about them gives you a sense of pride, and (3) in what ways do you share them with others? (e.g., some identities include: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious or spiritual affiliation, leadership role, etc.)
2	What holiday(s), if any, that you celebrate and what traditions are associated with each? Please, in detail, describe what the celebration(s) entail (e.g., food, specific clothing, music, dance styles, religious or spiritual worship etc.)
3	Has there been any past incidents that you felt disrespected one or multiple identities that you hold? If you feel comfortable sharing, could you please describe what happened and the impact it had? Finally, are there any things you recommend to help others avoid that happening again?
4	Are there any other aspects of your identity that are important to you and want to share?

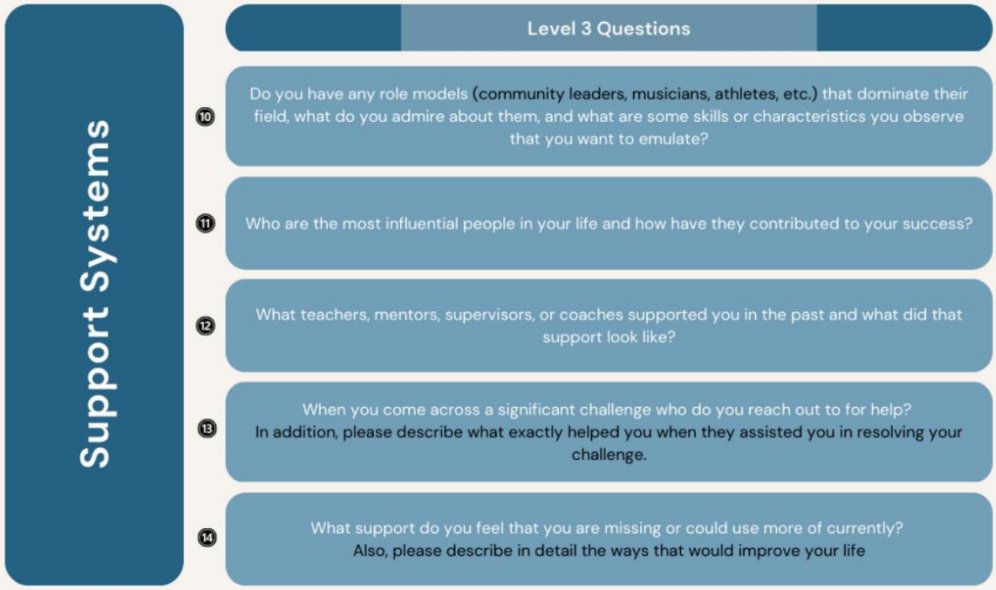
The following set of questions are meant to unearth the students' **motivation for and significance** of attending for the student and their loved ones:

Motivation and Significance

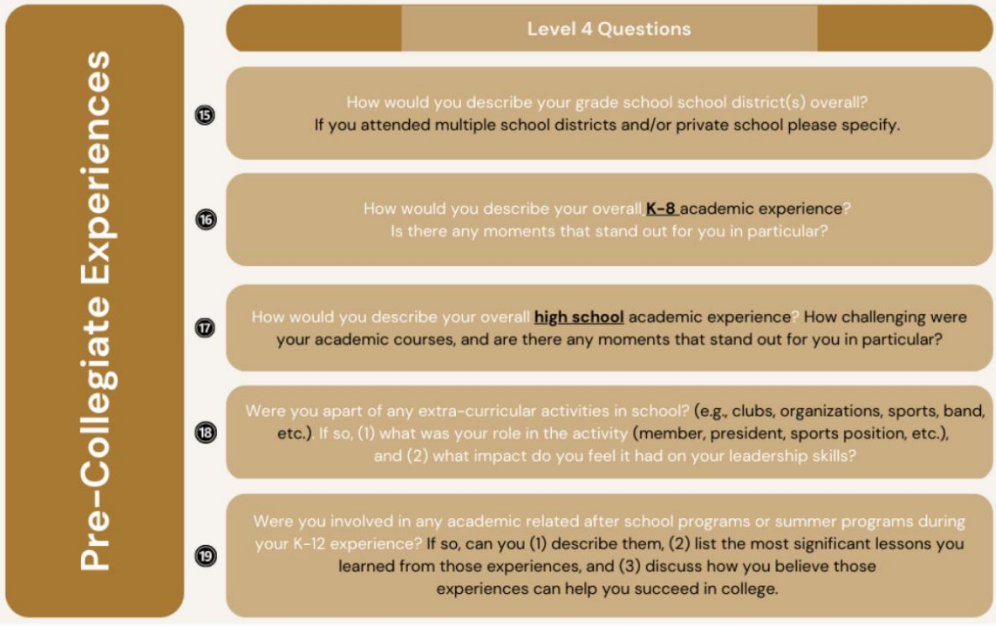
	Level 2 Questions
5	Can you describe what motivated you to attend college?
6	What is the significance and meaning behind attending college for you and those closest to you?
7	What is the immediate impact attaining your bachelor's degree will have on your life? Also, what are the things you hope it will achieve later in your career?
8	Do you have anyone in your life that attended college before, and if so, did that influence your decision to apply to college?
9	How did decide on your current college major and what excites you about your field of major? **If you are currently undecided**, what are some potential majors you are interested in and what about them spark your interest?

NARRATIVE-DRIVEN QUESTIONS FOR BLACK AND LATINX MALE COLLEGIANS

The following questions are meant to have students share the information on their existing **support systems:**



The following questions are designed to have students write about their **pre-collegiate experiences:**



NARRATIVE-DRIVEN QUESTIONS FOR BLACK AND LATINX MALE COLLEGIANS

The following questions are crafted to prompt students to discuss their **strengths and resilience**.

Strength and Resilience

	Level 5 Questions
20	Please discuss the following: (1) any specific skills, talents, and abilities you have, (2) how you have effectively used them to succeed academically, and (3) what have any teachers, coaches, or mentors complemented you on a a particular strength of yours?
21	Were there any courses that you had difficulty with in high school ? And if so, what do you think contributed to those issues? (e.g., study strategies, time management, not understanding the material, etc.)
22	What was a situation in school that you had moderate to significant obstacles and how did you (1) identify the issues that needed to be addressed (or sought help to identify them), and (2) overcome any negative self-talk (what did you say to yourself to turn things around) to ultimately succeed?
23	Were there any experiences in your life outside of school that presented a unique challenge? If comfortable, please describe in detail the challenge, how did it test your skills and abilities, and what new skills to you acquire due to overcoming the challenge?

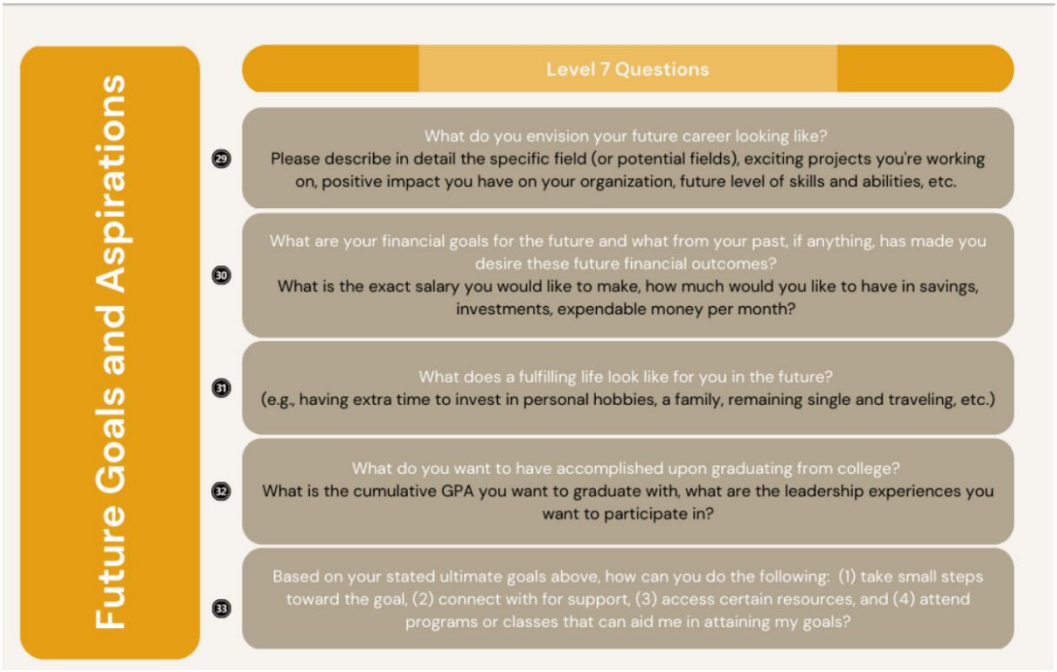
The next set of questions are meant for the student to discuss their **challenge areas and opportunities for growth:**

Challenges and Opportunities for Growth

	Level 6 Questions
24	What are some areas that you feel are areas you can grow your academic skills and abilities? What are you thoughts on how to develop them?
25	If comfortable, please share any negative academic experiences (negative interaction with peers, teacher, coach, etc.) that you felt disempowered. What are some ways you think this may impede your ability to succeed in college?
26	What are the skills you need to develop for your upcoming courses next semester? How do you plan to intentionally develop them?
27	What is something you feel is slightly out of reach, but would love to learn? How can you go about getting the tools and support necessary to learn that new skill or subject area?
28	Do you have any fear or anxiety regarding your upcoming semester? (e.g., worried about navigating resources, feeling unable to handle the workload, negative self-thoughts, etc.)

NARRATIVE-DRIVEN QUESTIONS FOR BLACK AND LATINX MALE COLLEGIANS

This final set of questions are meant for the students to discuss their **future goals and aspirations:**



LEVELS OF COMPETENCY FOR NARRATIVE-DRIVEN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Guiding Principles in Action:

Levels of Competency for Narrative-Driven Educational Practice

Low Competency:

- **Lacks** Cultural Competence and Empathy
- **Displays no interest** for learning about students' past experiences, values, and beliefs
- **Has a hands-off "by the book" or "not my job" approach** to helping with personal issues effecting academic performance toward academic success
- **Conveys a cold demeanor** and is seen as unapproachable and sharp in tone
- **Has extreme difficulty** navigating issues of discrimination and supporting effected students

Moderate Competency:

- **Has a foundational understanding** of Cross-Cultural Interactions
- **Trained asking open ended questions** when supporting students
- **Occasionally** discloses appropriate personal stories related to the student's issue
- **In the contemplative stage** concerning their power, privilege, and how they impact others
- **Viewed as agreeable** and polite
- **Known as a reliable resource** for addressing of race and discrimination

High Competency:

- **Trains students and staff** on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (including addressing discrimination on campus)
- **Frequently seeks out and engages with students** and learns about their experiences
- **Consistently sends resources** to students of color related to their specific academic and career interests
- **Identifies, encourages, and challenges** students of color to take on leadership positions on campus
- **Actively reflects** on their power, privilege, and impact to others

COMPLETE STUDY OVERVIEW

1 Chapter I: Introduction

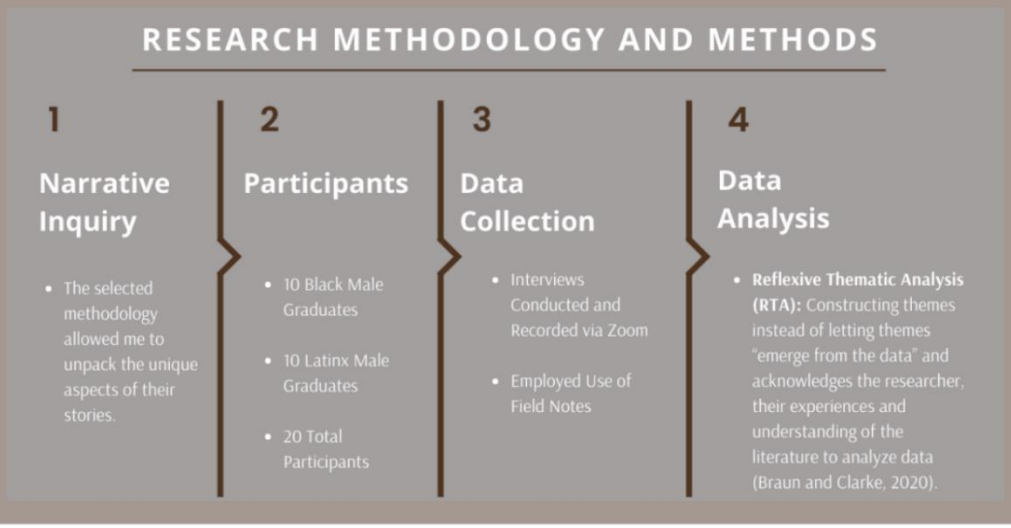
- **Purpose of the Study:** To capture the narratives of Black and Latinx male college graduates' to explore potential avenues of academically supporting both populations.
- **Research Aims:** To produce a list of culturally responsive recommendations that can assist educators in providing academic support to Black and Latinx male collegians.
- **Main Research Question:** What are the experiences that make Black and Latinx students academically successful?
- **Sub-Question:** What are the commonalities and differences amongst each population?
- **Participant Inclusion Criteria:** Participants had to have the following: (a) graduated from a U.S. 4-year college institution, (b) completed their bachelor's degree with a cumulative G.P.A. of 3.0 and above, (c) graduated between the years of 2017 -2022.

2 Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Main Themes Identified in the existing literature:

- Familial Support and its Positive Impact
- Positive and Supportive Interactions with Educators
- Practicing Discipline and its Effectiveness
- Practicing Positive Racial Socialization
- Sense of Belonging and its Importance
- Unpacking the Positive Influences of Pre-Collegiate Experiences
- **Dr. Shaun Harper's Anti-Deficit Framework:** A perspective challenging stereotypical notions of what it means to be a student of color and refocuses on the student's resilience and areas of strengths (Harper, 2012).

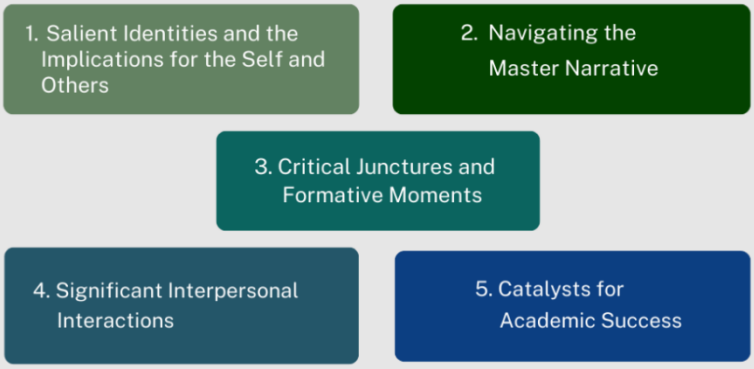
3 Chapter III: Research Methodology and Methods



COMPLETE STUDY OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

4 Chapter IV: Findings

5 Overarching Themes:



- 16 sub-themes
- Themes were constructed based on: the analysis of data that indicated contributing factors aiding in their academic success at their collegiate institutions.
- The data also revealed the ways each population is culturally distinct or in need of different forms of support (e.g., Black students encountering anti-blackness and Latinx students dealing with parental citizenship or establishing themselves in America).
- Findings also suggest participants embody their most salient identities when that helps them successfully maneuver a particular context (e.g., embodying the identity of an athlete to maintain focus and discipline in their academic studies).
- The findings supported the existing literature regarding each group placing emphasis on their racial and ethnic identities, which play a factor in their collegiate academic success.

5 Chapter V: Summary of Discussion and Conclusion

Upon reviewing the findings and revisiting existing literature, my thoughts align with Dr. Harper's (2012) original assertion that different frameworks, models, and tools are not a "panacea" to the systemic issues in education. The institutional barriers erected over generations will take the following: collective conscious reflection, creating an overarching mission and vision for the institution, a multi-pronged strategic plan, and a target investment of physical, financial, and Human Resources.

I fervently believe that consciously acknowledging Black and Latinx males' experiences with dignity and respect is crucial to creating environments where they can thrive. Understanding the distinctions between groups and their salient identities is vital to building trust in educational systems and fostering strong parental engagement. An educational leader seeking to produce culturally responsive changes should not only set out to execute a strategic plan but aim to deliver powerful experiences of self and community reflection, group discussion, and collective action toward dismantling racist ideals and perpetuating harmful narratives.

PROMISING ADVANCEMENTS IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD

Leveraging the Metaverse to Improve Collegiate Academic Success

Based on the current pace of technological advancement and how technology is embedded within learning environments, I would argue collegiate institutions are about to undergo a seismic shift. Although it will occur over decades, Kye et al. (2021) discuss the transition will likely see post-secondary institutions embrace ***Virtual Reality*** (VR), ***Mixed Reality*** (MR), and the ***Metaverse***. They discuss how virtual reality is a remote space for learners to interact and engage with objects in the digital world. Mixed reality, as the researchers described, allows students to wear a device (e.g., glasses with digital enhancements) that enables the user to see digital objects overlayed in the real world—for example, seeing a miniature digital recreation of the Eiffel Tower on a student desk. The Metaverse focuses on a sense of shared space connected to a myriad of immersive digital environments within a single virtual world (Kye et al., 2021). For example, imagine being thrust into a virtual world that places the user in a middle of a virtual HBCU homecoming filled with music, dancing, and personal interactions.

Participants in this dissertation study who attended college during the COVID-19 pandemic faced unique obstacles. Their challenges concerned learning and comprehension of concepts due to changing to a one hundred percent online environment. There were practical issues, such as not having enough licenses to have students use special programs within engineering and computer science majors. Some participants affected by the pandemic also encountered issues with access to reliable internet and computer devices. They also had difficulty with lessons partially requiring hands-on engagement, especially ones relying heavily on motor skills, dexterity, and sense of touch. ***Research that focuses on providing equitable solutions to issues regarding technology and access for minoritized students*** is a timely conversation in the wake of these emerging technologies. Finally, ***conducting research with Black and Latinx males that introduce them to digital environments*** (e.g., the Metaverse) and ***leveraging the technology to design their future academic success*** and visually experience it in a virtually rendered environment may yield fascinating results. ***Researchers can conduct a longitudinal mixed-method study*** that measures (via a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews) the ***impact of the technology on Black and Latinx male collegians' academic success***. Finally, they can analyze the academic impact after several sessions— over a few semesters—of revisiting their designs.

USEFUL RESOURCES, REFERENCES, AND ABOUT THE PH.D. IN LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE

Resources

- **Anti-Racism:** Anti-Racism: Learning, Healing, and Taking Action. (n.d.). Dso.college.harvard.edu. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from https://dso.college.harvard.edu/anti-racism
- **Black Male College Success:** Harper, S. (2012). Black male success in higher education: A report from the national Black male college achievement study. University of Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education. https://web-app.usc.edu/web/rossier/publications/231/Harper%20(2012)%20Black%20Male%20Success.pdf
- **Black and Latinx Male Success:** Huerta, A. H., & Dizon, J. P. M. (2021). Redistributing Resources for Men of Color in Higher Education. About Campus: Enriching the Student Learning Experience, 26(4), 19–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/10864822211038932
- **Racial Justice, Equity, and Anti-Racism :** Racial Justice, Racial Equity, and Anti-Racism Reading List. (2020, August 9). Harvard Medical School. https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty-research/library-knowledge-services/collections/diversity-inclusion-belonging/anti-racist
- **Latinx Male Success:** Unidos US. (2022). Latino Student Success: Advancing U.S. Educational Progress for All [Review of Latino Student Success: Advancing U.S. Educational Progress for All]. In Unidos U.S. (pp. 1–29). Unidos US. https://unidosus.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/UnidosUS_Latino-Education_2022.pdf

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Valencia, R. R. (1997). The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice. Abingdon, London: Routledge Falmer.

Note. If you would like to read the complete published dissertation in full please go to: https://aura.antioch.edu

About the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program: Antioch University's innovative doctoral program in Leadership and Change creates thoughtful leaders that act as change agents within their organizations. The dissertation process challenges students to conduct original research that is mindful of the social justice principles instilled in each doctoral learner within the program.