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Lessons Learned from College-Educated, Employed Black Male Mentors: A Qualitative Anti-Deficit Study of College Persistence and Career Success

Cecil Wright
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Lessons Learned from College-Educated, Employed Black Male Mentors: A Qualitative Anti-Deficit Study of College Persistence and Career Success

Abstract
The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutic, phenomenological study was to learn how college-educated, employed Black males’ mentors successfully completed their undergraduate degrees and went on to be success stories in their career fields. The research focused on college persistence and career success by asking the mentors to comment about their experiences along four pipeline points (precollege socialization and readiness, college achievement, postcollege success, and employment postgraduation). The participants for this study were Black male mentors selected from a pool of active mentors serving Black male high school students in a one-on one setting at a male empowerment seminar held annually at a private college in New York in 2009 through 2012. Given the paucity of research in this area, this study used a qualitative research methodology in order to uncover and understand what lies behind Black male success before, during, and after college. Questionnaires and interviews were used as instruments to obtain data. The questionnaire collected demographic data that helped in the selection process. Four interview questions were used to explore college persistence and career success. The questions asked (a) how family members nurture and sustain Black male students’ interest in school, (b) how college experiences enable Black males to compete for careers in their fields, (c) what factors influenced Black male career choices, (d) and if they were employed in their desired careers. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher provided findings and recommendations that will help improve college persistence and career success for Black males.

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Lessons Learned From College-Educated, Employed Black Male Mentors:  
A Qualitative Anti-Deficit Study of College Persistence and Career Success

By  
Cecil Wright

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by  
Dr. Byron Hargrove

Committee Member  
Dr. Christine Casey

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education  
St. John Fisher College

August, 2013
Dedication

I thank God, the head of my life, for bringing me this far. I dedicate this dissertation to my entire family. We all took this journey together. To my wife, Karian, thank you for your support and understanding during this journey. To our children Abigail, Amber, and Justice, this is for you. Thank you for your understanding and thoughtfulness.

I would like to give a special thanks to some important people in my life. To my mother, Mavis, for your love, care, and being there for me. You taught me that nothing is impossible. To my uncle Leslie, you have been the rock, I thank you for being my biggest supporter and for encouraging me to “always have a vision beyond.” To my grand aunt Roslyn the Matriarch thanks for reminding us to do our best and never give up. To my Aunt Joan thank you for your encouragement and support, without you this would not be possible. Finally to my sister, Paula, for looking out for me during my weakest moments, you encouraged and protected me from when we were children, and I thank you.
Biographical Sketch

Cecil Wright is currently the Director of Undergraduate Admissions at Monroe College in Bronx, New York. Mr. Wright attended Monroe College, graduating in 2005 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management. He completed his Master’s of Business Administration in 2007 from King Graduate School at Monroe College.

Mr. Wright began his doctoral studies in 2011. He attended the St. John Fisher College Ed.D. program in Executive Leadership at the College of New Rochelle. Mr. Wright pursued his research on Lesson Learned from College Educated Employed Black Males—anti-deficit study under the guidance of Dr. Byron Hargrove committee chair and Dr. Christine Casey committee member.
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This dissertation would not have been possible without the contributions of many. I would not have been able to complete the study without the support of my family, committee, cohort members, and colleagues.

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I would like to extend a special thank you to my cohort members and the faculty at St. Fisher College for your support and encourage. To Dr. Janice Kelly who served as my independent reader thank you. Without you, this would not be possible. To Dr.
Claudia Edwards for your constant reminder of purpose, the process and journey, I thank you.

Lastly, I would like to thank the men that participated in this study. Your stories inspired me, and I am grateful for your contribution and the rich data you provided to make this dissertation a success.
Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutic, phenomenological study was to learn how college-educated, employed Black males’ mentors successfully completed their undergraduate degrees and went on to be success stories in their career fields. The research focused on college persistence and career success by asking the mentors to comment about their experiences along four pipeline points (precollege socialization and readiness, college achievement, postcollege success, and employment postgraduation). The participants for this study were Black male mentors selected from a pool of active mentors serving Black male high school students in a one-on one setting at a male empowerment seminar held annually at a private college in New York in 2009 through 2012.

Given the paucity of research in this area, this study used a qualitative research methodology in order to uncover and understand what lies behind Black male success before, during, and after college. Questionnaires and interviews were used as instruments to obtain data. The questionnaire collected demographic data that helped in the selection process. Four interview questions were used to explore college persistence and career success. The questions asked (a) how family members nurture and sustain Black male students’ interest in school, (b) how college experiences enable Black males to compete for careers in their fields, (c) what factors influenced Black male career choices, (d) and if they were employed in their desired careers. At the conclusion of the study, the
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Across the United States, Black males are proportionately underrepresented in colleges and those who do enroll in postsecondary education choose less competitive institutions and academic programs (Cuyjet, 2006). It is clear that despite a history of significant educational advancement since 1954, an overwhelming number of Black males still fall victim to academic underperformance and failure in America’s schools (Ennis, 2010). According to Walsh, Bingham, Brown, and Ward (2001), “While education and career options were not available to African Americans in previous eras, today educational and career opportunities abound, yet many African Americans [do not] take advantage of these opportunities” (p. 109). Research shows that in this global economy, especially considering the recent economic challenges, providing greater access to postsecondary education to individuals from all racial and ethnic backgrounds remains one of the most important challenges facing our nation. The lack of opportunity for a substantial percentage of Black males to prosper has a negative social and economic impact on the Black community. Thus, it is important to promote the significance of pursuing a college degree to a greater number of Black males.

It is clear, however, that a large proportion of Black males are not college ready. In 2002, Black males comprised only 4.3% of students enrolled at institutions of higher education, the same percentage as in 1976 (Harper, 2006; Strayhorn, 2010). Black male
students are also often comparatively less prepared than are others for the rigors of college-level academic work (Bonner & Bailey, 2006, Loury, 2004, Lundry-Wagner & Gasman, 2011; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009). Only 47% of Black male students graduated on time from U.S colleges in 2008, compared to 78% of White male students (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). Across four cohorts of undergraduates, the six-year graduation rate for all Black male students attending public colleges and universities was 33.3% compared to 48.1% for students overall (Harper, 2012). The most recent research by the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education found that Black male college completion rates are the lowest among both sexes and all racial/ethnic groups in U.S higher education (Harper, 2012). Not surprisingly, Black male college graduates also lag behind their Latino and Asian American male counterparts in enrollments in graduate and professional schools. For instance, during a 30-year period from 1977–2007, Black men experienced a 109% increase in prebaccalaureate degree attainment, compared to 242% for Latino men and 425% for Asian American men, the comparative rates of increase for Black women were 253% (Harper & Davis III, 2012). These statistics are glaring and research by Harper (2012), Cuyget (2007), and Hawkins (1996) determined that this issue of underperformance in college and professional graduate schools may originate from socioeconomic issues linked to their early (K–12) educational pipeline deficits.

**Black males in American educational system K–12.** It is clear that the early educational underachievement of young Black boys must be observed as an urgent national priority. The struggles faced by Black males in K–12, is multifaceted. Cuyjet (2011) found that Black males lead all other groups of students in suspensions,
expulsions, behavioral problems, and referrals to special classes for slow learners. Literature has pointed to many factors that may influence academic choices and achievement for Black males. The continuation of residential segregation in the United States concentrates Black students in public K–12 schools that have fewer resources, lower per-student expenditures, fewer advanced placement courses, and less experienced teachers than the suburban schools many White students attend (Frankenburg & Lee, 2002; McDonough, 1998; Orfield, 2001). This leads to measurable differences in the quality of Black students’ educational experiences, leaving many insufficiently prepared to engage in the competitive college admissions process (Chang, 2000; Griffin & Allen, 2006; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004; St. John, 2003).

Research has proven various factors affecting Black male’s academic experience. Steele (2004) indicated that African American students are more likely to (a) be taught by uncertified and poorly trained teachers, (b) experience corporal punishment and suspensions, (c) encounter an especially distracting peer culture in junior or high school, (d) be tracked into lower academic and special education classes, and (e) go to schools with few or no advanced placement courses. Carty (2010) explained that an examination of key stages in the educational pipeline (i.e., prekindergarten through professional and doctoral level education) demonstrates the lack of a smooth flow from one matriculation stage to the next, which results in a severe underrepresentation of Black males in professional positions in the U.S. workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001). The Schott Foundation for Public Education released a report in 2005 that warned about “ alarming statistics on Black male students showing bleak under-achievement on every school-related factor” (Holzman, 2005, p. 2). This report also noted that this is a situation
that “cries out for attention” (Holzman, 2005, p. 2). Holzman adds that leaders, educators and policy makers need to “understand that the enormity of school failure has created a rip tide of negative results for Black male students and society as a whole” (Holzman, 2005, p. 2). This report cites data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) indicating that in 2001, 58% of Black males in the United States did not earn their high school diplomas with their cohort (Holzman, 2005, p.4).

The report also shows that in the 10 states that educate the highest numbers of Black males in the public school system (Florida, Texas, New York, Georgia, California, Illinois, North Carolina, Louisiana, Michigan, and Maryland), the White/Black achievement gap (measured by high school graduation rate) ranged from 17 to 43%. New York and Illinois had the worst Black/White graduation rate gap at 43% and 40%, respectively. In 2001–2002, New York State had the worst Black male graduation rate of 30% (Holzman, 2004, p. 8). Brown (2004) asserted that K–12 teachers did not understand the plight of young Black males and that because of this lack of understanding, teachers often considered them as a disciplinary problem or as having learning issues. With these diagnoses, young Black males were placed in detention, assigned to in-school suspension, suspended from school, or placed in special education classes more frequently than their non–Black male counterparts (Dougherty, 2008). Black families who do not have the financial resources necessary to expose their children to more rigorous academic programs are the ones left behind in the social and economic arenas. Even with these limited resources, there are those who triumph over these challenges and become college educated and are gainfully employed.
**Socioeconomic challenges.** A closer look at some of the data that makes up the Equality Index provides a glimpse into the social conditions that yield the disparities that place Black males at a distinct disadvantage in U.S. society. Black males have more trouble purchasing a home, have lower home values, have lower median incomes, own fewer businesses, and are less likely to participate in a 401(k) retirement plan. Black males are less likely than the general population to be employed, live above the poverty line, have a home computer with Internet access, own a car, and succeed in higher education (Harper, 2010). The connection among joblessness, lack of education, and high rates of incarceration is also worth considering. In 2002, 65% of Black male high school dropouts in their 20s were jobless and by 2004, the share had grown to 72% (Edelman, Holzer, & Offner, 2006). Many Black males are trapped in low-income jobs and lack access to opportunities to move up the social and economic ladders because they do not have the credentials to find meaningful employment. Even with these mounting challenges such as negative interactions with the criminal justice system, unequal educational opportunities, and diminished expectations of success, there are those who still persist and become educated and employed college graduates. However, researchers have been slow to document the profile of successful educated Black males.

**Problem Statement**

Over a five-year period (2004–2009), nearly a quarter million bachelor’s degrees were conferred upon Black men in the United States, a number that is undeniably insufficient (Harper, 2007). Perhaps more problematic, though, is that few of the 249,294 college students were ever asked how they navigated their way to and through the institutions they attended (Harper, 2012). According to Harper (2012), it is time for
national studies to move beyond deficit perspectives on achievement by highlighting persons, policies, programs, and resources that help Black males succeed across a range of college and university contexts. Therefore, as an alternative of adding to the now exhaustive body of literature and conversations around why Black males enrollment and degree attainment rates are so low, the present study sought to find instructive insights from engaged students who did well and maximized their college experiences and, ultimately, how this experience positioned them to become gainfully employed. This empirical study did not focus on the achievement deficits of Black males. Rather, more data needs to be collected on factors that lead to academic and career success for Black males. In this study, success was described as obtaining a college degree and achieving a career. Harper (2012) provided a rare insight into the life of Black males enrolled in college from a success model. Using an anti-deficit approach, Harper (2012) qualitatively examined precollege socialization and readiness factors, college achievement factors, and postcollege success factors using in-depth interviews with 219 Black males (See Appendix A). Although this study provided a promising start to learning about success factors for Black male college students, more research needs to build on this line of empirical research by examining the perspectives of Black male college graduates who have gone on to establish great careers. Thus, the present study will partially replicate and extend the Harper (2012) study by qualitatively examining the factors that facilitated college enrollment, academic achievement, degree completion, and subsequent employment from the in-depth perspective of high achieving Black males who beat the odds and defied the at-risk label.
Theoretical Rationale

The theoretical rationale for this study will employ Harper’s anti-deficit framework, which inverts commonly asked questions about educational disadvantage, underrepresentation, insufficient preparation, academic underperformance, disengagement, and Black male student attrition. In 2012, Harper reframed the approach to study Black male college achievement. His Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework emphasizes understanding how Black male achievers managed to gain admission to their institutions, overcome hurdles that typically place them at a disadvantage and amass profiles of experiences that render them competitive in all areas of society. The Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework focuses on three broad categories: precollege socialization and readiness, college achievement, and precollege success in helping to understand the phenomenon of Black male student success (Harper, 2011). These three categories have eight researchable dimensions of achievement including: (a) familial factors, (b) K–12 school forces, (c) out of school prep resources, (d) class room experiences, (e) out of class engagement, (f) enriching educational experiences, (g) graduate school enrollment, and (h) career readiness, all of which will be examined through three separate theories (Harper, 2012). The research questions for this study came from the framework of Harper’s anti-deficit model. These questions allowed further exploration into the factors that contribute to the success of Black males who are college graduates and currently employed.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological qualititative study is to learn about the success factors and experiences of college-educated, employed Black males. Studying the
success factors of college-educated, employed Black males is an area that has not been examined over the past decade. Emphasis is most often placed on exploring barriers rather than the facilitator factors (St. John et al., 2011). The success stories of Black males in American higher education have been secondary to the emphasis placed on why they were not doing well (Harper, 2012). The objective of this study was to explore the resources, social and cultural capital, and precollege educational privileges of successful Black males using in-depth qualitative interviews. Drawing from the Harper’s (2012) methodology this study utilized a qualitative approach in order to examine the first-hand experiences of successful Black men.

Research Questions

Utilizing the anti-deficit achievement framework developed by Harper (2012), this study replicated the three pipelines points (precollege socialization and readiness, college achievement, and post college success) as well eight researchable dimensions of achievement (familial factors, K-12 school forces, out-of-school college prep resources, classroom experiences, out-of-class engagement, enriching educational experiences, graduate school enrollment, and career readiness). In addition, this study added a new pipeline point focusing on employment pregraduation as well as two new researchable dimensions of achievement (career choice and career experience). Thus, the following research questions were examined:

1. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, how do family members nurture and sustain Black male students’ interest in school?

2. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, which college experiences enable Black men to compete successfully for careers in their fields?
3. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, what factors influenced Black Male career choices?

4. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, to what degree are Black male participants currently employed in their desired careers?

**Significance of the Study**

Educators, researchers, policymakers, and concerned others continually find themselves asking why Black males are failing to complete their undergraduate degrees. This study was designed to explore factors that inform how Black males succeed. This study was considered important and appropriate because of the underrepresentation of Black male students’ success stories and the need for more research to find out what works and what instruments can be developed to further inform stakeholders.

The methods of this study diametrically opposed those of many researchers that usually highlight the negative. This study focused on variables such as policies, programs, and resources that helped Black men succeed. As an alternative to exploring the extensive body of literature and conversations about why Black male enrollment and degree attainment rates are so low, this study pursued enlightening insights from engaged Black males who did well and made the most of their college experiences. No one is a better source of instructive insight on what it takes Black males to succeed in college than Black Men who have actually succeeded in college themselves (Harper, 2012).

Specifically, this research sought to increase the body of knowledge relating to Black male success beyond higher education, building on and extending Harper’s (2012) research findings into adulthood and successful employment.
Definition of Terms

*Academic success:* The successful completion of an undergraduate degree

*African American:* Citizens or residents of the United States who have at least partial ancestry from the continent of Africa (Brown, 2010). The term *African American* is used interchangeably with *Black*.


*At risk:* Students are considered at-risk when they experience a significant mismatch between their circumstances and needs, and the capacity or willingness of the school to accept, accommodate, and respond to them in a manner that supports and enables their maximum social, emotional and intellectual growth and development (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2007)

*Black male:* Black male will be defined using Brown’s (2010) definition, and encompasses all of the ethnic subgroups that comprise the Black race: Caribbean-American, Africans in America (such as Nigerian-Americans), Afro-Latinos who consider themselves Black, and African-Americans whose ancestors were brought to North and South America involuntarily. *African-American* and *Black* male will be used interchangeably (Brown, 2010).

*Culture shock:* For the purpose of this study, culture shock is defined as personal disorientation experienced by the interviewee due to a change in social and professional environment.
**Extracurricular activities involvement:** For the purpose of this study, extracurricular activities involvement was defined as any involvement in a purposeful enriching activity that may give an opportunity to put theory into practice.

**Family and parental involvement in education:** For the purpose of this study, family and parental involvement was defined as any support from relatives toward a desired educational outcome.

**Precollege program and advanced classes:** For the purpose of this study precollege programs and advanced classes were defined as any academic enrichment activities outside of the minimum required to complete high school.

**Family and parental involvement in education:** For the purpose of this study, family and parental involvement was defined as any support from relatives towards a desired educational outcome.

**Relationship with faculty:** For the purpose of this study, relationship with faculty was described as a constant dialogue between a student and an instructor, with an emphasis on improving academic and career outcomes.

**Student clubs and organizations:** For the purpose of this study, student clubs and organizations were defined as any organized group that is designed to bring students together for learning experiences.

**Workplace politics:** For the purpose of this study, workplace politics is defined as cultural norms and beliefs of an organization and the complexities that come with maneuvering through such activities.
Chapter Summary

This study fills a gap in the literature by focusing on the factors that contributed to Black male success and the connections to positive reinforcement. While there is extensive research that indicates that few African American students experience success in presecondary education, little research has been done to investigate the phenomenon that there are high achieving Black males who successfully navigate the system (Jett, 2009). Instead of focusing on the resources, social and cultural capital, and precollege educational privilege that some participants lacked, Harper (2012) explored how Black males acquired various forms of capital needed to successfully navigate their way to success. It is important that more attention be focused on the significant achievements that some of these young men are making in higher education and more particularly what skills, characteristics, support mechanisms, mindset and attitudes promote their academic success (Bird, 1996; McMillian & Reed, 1993; Ross, 1998). Chapter 2, the review of the literature, examines Black male success, their persistence and academic accomplishments in spite of society’s weak expectations. Chapter 3 highlights the methodology employed for this study. This section will include general perspectives, research contexts, research participants, instruments used in data collection, and procedures for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 reviews the results of the study, including major findings, qualitative research methods, research questions and a summary of the outcomes. The final chapter, Chapter 5, highlights the implications of the findings, the limitations of the study, and the researcher’s recommendations for practice and future studies.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction and Purpose

This chapter will provide an overview of the relevant scholarly works focused on the research on Black males’ success. The literature review will provide an in-depth discussion of Harper’s (2012) anti-deficit framework (see Appendix A), and Bonner’s (1997) study of gifted Black male college students.

Review of the Literature

Harper’s anti-deficit framework. In 2012, Harper, an authority on Black males’ success, created the anti-deficit framework—this inverted questions that are commonly asked about educational disadvantage, underrepresentation, insufficient preparation, academic underperformance, disengagement, and Black male student attrition (Harper, 2012). It included some questions that researchers could explore to understand Black undergraduate men who successfully navigate their way to and through higher education and onward to rewarding precollege options (Harper, 2009).

Despite the dismal outlook for many Black males, there are those who successfully navigate through the higher education system to attain a baccalaureate degree (Harper, 2012). For over a decade, Harper and other researchers insisted that “the earlier we focus on the scholar identities of Black males, the more likely we are to develop a future generation of Black male scholars who are in a position to break the vicious cycle of underachievement” (Bonner, 2010; Whiting, 2006, p.223). Cuyjet (2010) supports this framework by arguing that those who are interested in Black male students’
success have much to learn from Black males who have actually been successful in completing their presecondary studies. Harper’s anti-deficit approach is further supported by over a decade of empirical positive psychology research, which suggests that by shifting to a focus on the positive traits of individuals, important strides can be made in understanding not only how to enhance people’s lives, but also how to prevent or buffer against negative psychological effects (e.g., Pezent, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The purpose of Harper’s (2012) study was to provide useful insight about Black male college students’ success in the United States and to provide a balanced report on Black male achievement. According to Harper (2012), this framework was informed by three decades of literature on Black men in education and society, as well as theories from sociology, psychology, and gender studies. The report stressed that to increase Black male educational attainment, the popular one-sided emphasis on failure and low-performing Black male undergraduates must be counterbalanced with insights gathered from those who somehow managed to navigate their way to and through higher education.

Harper’s (2012) anti-deficit framework created three pipeline points (precollege socialization and readiness, college achievement and postcollege success) as well eight researchable dimensions of achievement (familial factors, K–12 school forces, out-of-school college prep resources, classroom experiences, out-of-class engagement, enriching educational experiences, graduate school enrollment, and career readiness). Each dimension then had two to four questions that were used in anti-deficit reframing of Black male achievement in higher education.
Harper used this anti-framework to conduct an extensive qualitative study of 219 Black male students (all of whom had earned cumulative grade point averages above 3.0) from 42 different colleges and universities, in 20 different states across the country, including six different types of institutions. The data were collected one campus at a time, in face-to-face interviews with individual students (Harper, 2012). These men established lengthy records of leadership and active engagement in multiple student organizations and developed meaningful relationships with campus administrators and faculty outside of the classroom. The results also showed that these men participated in enriching educational experiences such as study abroad programs, internships, service learning, and summer research programs. In addition, these Black men also earned numerous merit-based scholarships and honors in recognition of their college achievements. This research had tremendous diversity in the sample, evidenced by the participant demographics and family characteristics. Harper chronologically captured what the men experienced, who supported them, and which interventions enhanced their educational experiences and enabled them to succeed.

These findings were broken down into four major categories: (a) getting to college, (b) choosing college, (c) paying for college, and (d) transitioning to college. Harper (2012) found that despite all that is stacked against Black males—low teacher expectations, insufficient academic preparation for college-level work, racist and culturally unresponsive campus environments, and the debilitating consequences of severe underrepresentation, there are still those who fight their way through to successful college completion (Harper, 2012).
**Getting to college.** When asked, “Did you always know you were going to college?” the overwhelming majority of students responded, “Yes—it was never a question of if, but where.” Parents consistently conveyed what many of the participants characterized as nonnegotiable expectations that they would pursue postsecondary education. In the interviews, many of the Black males stated that from boyhood through high school, parents and other family members reinforced to them that college was the most viable pathway to advance socially and succeed. Interestingly, nearly half the participants came from homes where neither parent had attained a bachelor’s degree (Harper, 2012).

The participants’ early schooling experiences usually included at least one influential teacher who helped solidify their interest in going to college (Harper, 2012). Several told stories about how a few educators went beyond typical teaching duties to ensure these young men had the information, resources, and support necessary to succeed in school. Fewer than 20% had participated in K–12 programs for the gifted and academically talented, only 49.3% had taken an advanced placement course in high school, and some graduated from high school with cumulative GPAs below 3.0 (Harper, 2012). However, the report indicated that many or most participants were actively involved and held leadership positions in school clubs and campus activities.

**Choosing college.** When asked who helped them most in searching for and choosing a college, most participants named their parents, extended family members (for example, cousins who had gone to college), and high school teachers. Surprisingly, few said their guidance counselors. The report pointed to instances where some counselors told these students that applying to elite private institutions like Williams College or
Brown University was pointless because they stood no chance of acceptance. Instead, they were encouraged to apply to comprehensive state universities and historical black colleges and universities (HBCU). Harper went on to explain that several students at the 18 elite private colleges and universities said that they would not have been at those institutions had they taken seriously the advice their guidance counselors offered (Harper, 2012). When asked about the race of their counselors, the overwhelming majority of participants indicated they were White (Harper, 2012). Many who attended public high schools had limited access to their guidance counselors because the student-to-counselor ratio was so large; more than 73% of participants in this study graduated from public high schools (Harper, 2012).

**Paying for college.** Two-thirds of Black men who start at public colleges and universities do not graduate within six years, which is the lowest college completion rate among both sexes and all racial groups in higher education (Harper, 2012). Explanations for this are complex and attributable to an extensive set of factors. One problem that has been well documented in the *Journal of College Student Retention*, the *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, and other publications, is that many students drop out of college because they cannot afford to pay tuition and other educational expenses (Harper, 2012). Across all six-institution types, men in the national study attributed much of their success to being able to pursue their bachelor’s degrees without the burden of financial stress. For example, fewer than half (47.8%) of Black men at the private HBCUs in this sample graduated within six years. Participants on those campuses reported that many of their peers withdrew for financial reasons or transferred to less expensive public institutions.
Harper’s report also elaborated on how participants at HBCUs were considerably more likely than were participants elsewhere to work off-campus jobs. This might help explain, at least in part, why Black male six-year graduation rates were lowest on those campuses (between 37.3% and 29.4%; Harper, 2012). He went on to explain that low-income and working-class students at Ivy League universities, Stanford, and the liberal arts colleges often benefitted from campus policies that permit students whose parents earn below a certain income threshold (e.g., $50,000) to attend at no cost. Moreover, the report states that achievers who attended DePauw University, Lafayette College, and other institutions that host the Posse Scholars Program found tremendous relief in knowing their tuition and fees were covered by their fellowships (Harper, 2012).

**Transitioning to college.** Some colleges provide precollege programming, such as bridge programs, that the participants felt made large institutions feel smaller and easier to navigate. They also allowed newcomers to interact with faculty and administrators as well as older same-race students who served as peer mentors. Several of these Black males agreed that their peers were more influential than were their assigned academic advisors, who often helped only with their course selections. It was peers, mostly older Black Men, who helped them figure out how to succeed (Harper, 2012). Harper’s study further explained that amplifying the troubled status of Black male students at all levels of education has, unfortunately, yielded few solutions. Thus, educational outcomes for this population have remained stagnant or worsened in recent years (Harper, 2012). This is attributable, at least in part, to the deficit orientation that is constantly reinforced in the media, academic research journals, and educational practice. Conducting research using a balanced approach to Black male achievement in college will provide all concerned with
some valuable information that will help with identifying more ways to improve the
status of Black males in higher education and careers outcomes.

Harper (2012) stated that the most surprising and most disappointing finding was
that nearly every student interviewed said it was the first time someone had sat him down
to ask how he successfully navigated his way to and through higher education. In the
study, he asked what compelled them to be engaged in student organizations and college
classrooms, and what he could learn from them to help improve achievement and
engagement among Black male collegians (Harper, 2012). In many interviews, the men
asserted, “the only thing that makes me different from them is that I was lucky enough to
have parents who maintain invariably high expectations, an influential teacher, access to
a college preparatory program, a peer mentor who shared the secrets of success” (Harper,
2012). To investigate the factors leading to Black male success Harper (2012) inverts the
deficit questions to form an anti-deficit approach.

Harper (2012) maintains that “asking those who have been successful to talk
about what helped them succeed is the most powerful recommendation he has for anyone
who endeavors to improve the status of Black male students.” He went on to explain that
the most disappointing finding in the National Black Male College Achievement Study
conducted at the University of Pennsylvania (Harper, 2012) was that few participants had
been consulted for helpful and potentially instructive insights into success. Harper’s
(2012) was a pivot study that included 419 participants from many different academic
institutions and different socioeconomic classes. It elicited responses that provide a
foundation for looking at Black male success from an anti-deficit perspective. By
conducting a qualitative study focusing on what is going right, in this dissertation I
expandws on the work of Harper (2012) to investigate the factors that contributed to not only the college success of Black men but also their success after college. In addition to Harper’s (2012) study, Bonner and colleagues (Bonner, 1997; 2010; Bonner & Bailey, 2006; Bonner, Lewis, Bowmann-Perrott, Hill-Jackson, & James, 2009) have been studying Black males who are not only academically inclined but also gifted; these men are rarely spoken to about their academic giftedness.

**Bonner’s case study of academically gifted African American males.** In 2010, Bonner reported his findings from a 1997 study on gifted African American males in a book entitled *Academically Gifted African American Male College Students*. The goal of this book was to offer alternatives ways to look at the issues that continue to threaten the achievement of Black men in general and academically gifted Black males in particular. Bonner (2010) conducted two case studies in an attempt to address the question of how we can look at Black males in a different light, using a positive lens. These studies were conducted at two separate institutions. Traditionally White Institution (TWI; a small rural East Texas community located approximately 60 miles northeast of Dallas) and a HBCU called Gambling State University (GSU). GSU is a public, four-year, coed, liberal arts university established in 1901. The researcher conducted a qualitative study where the participants were asked to complete a biographical questionnaire before meeting with the interviewer. This questionnaire included personal information as well as information related to their families. The face-to-face interview consisted of 39 open-ended standardized questions formatted to minimize the variation in questions. These questions were posed to elicit responses from participants that highlight their academic, social, and psychosocial experiences. The results from this study demonstrated Black male success at
both TWIs and HBCUs and summarized four important categories that affected success: (a) family influence and support, (b) factors that influenced college selection, (c) self-perception, and (d) institutional environment.

**Family influence and support.** Bonner (2010) found that his participants expressed family influence and support as a key factor that assisted them to succeed in college. The participants revealed that the psychological and emotional support that their family provided through their pursuit of an undergraduate degree helped them to focus. These support mechanisms came in many forms, ranging from campus visits to telephone conversations. Additionally, the participants felt that their parents were very involved across their entire educational career. Their parents provided the basic skills and a mindset that helped them overcome the challenges of higher education. Bonner (2010) explained that the support of families in many of the participants' lives led to the institutions paying more attention to the success of the students, because they knew that there was a strong family unit supporting the student. Several participants in the study claimed that geographical location weighed heavily on their decision of where to attend college. Although this was widely selected, it was not the most influential factor in the decision-making process. The perceived ability to develop meaningful professional relationship with faculty, college administrators, and to gain support for their study were among the most significant factors in deciding which college to attend (Bonner, 2010).

Another key factor in selecting a college was the involvement of parents who attended college. These parents were able to give insight on institutional supports, grants, campus support, and classroom sizes and to provide a general overview of what to expect from
certain institutions, either because of personal experiences or through their association with other individuals who are familiar with the college.

**Self-perception.** Bonner (2010) found that respondents’ perception of self and friends’, administrations’ and family’s perceptions of the gifted Black males were incongruent. During the research conducted by Bonner, he found that because of fear of others’ reactions even gifted Black males are reluctant to boldly state their giftedness. Some participants in the study found their institutions were not as prepared to support and encourage them as they would have liked. The study also pointed out that there were different levels of expectations for gifted Black males who had superior preparation than for those who were gifted, but came from weaker educational backgrounds. This highlights the role that institutional environment can have on Black male success in higher education.

**Institutional environment.** The respondents in the study noted that the institutional environment was an important factor that lead to their success. One participant’s perception of his institutional environment was captured clearly when he stated that his institution was being supportive of his academic giftedness primarily by providing him with needed academic assistance and guidance to successfully matriculate. According to Bonner (2010), different types of institutions create different environmental experiences. Ernest Pascarella (1980) noted that if TWIs followed the lead of HBCUs in creating an educational environment that was more conducive to the success of Black male students, they could potentially contribute to the creation of a more supportive and validating climate for Black male students when they are the minority on campus. Bonner (2010) recommends that future studies be conducted concerning institutional support for
Black males with close attention paid to gifted students. The report also indicates a need for more attention to faculty relationships, peer relationships, and institutional environment. Composition of race on campus was an important consideration, but was not an overarching importance. The review of Bonner’s research spoke to the multifaceted and complex nature of understanding Black male success. By utilizing, a qualitative approach Bonner was able to capture the core of the untold stories from these college students. While Bonner’s (2010) study identified factors that contributed to the success of gifted Black men, his study is limited, because it does not apply to Black men who were never identified as such.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter put forth the current conditions, general purposes, theoretical frameworks, and essential arguments that will guide this research. It established the relevance and need for a qualitative analysis of the experiences of Black males who succeed by focusing on what led to their success. The review of literature highlights factors relevant to Black male success in college. Harper and Bonner have shown the need to go beyond the deficit approach and look for positive factors that drive degree completion in Black male undergraduates’ studies. While their success in college is important, so too is their success after college.

Harper’s anti-deficit framework is a theory that is worth building on. Harper’s study had good depth in the range of study, the number of participants, the quality of the questions used in the framework, and the variances in socioeconomic classes of the interviewees. On the other hand, the study stopped short of fully exploring success as it relates to employment. This provided a gap in the literature for the researcher to explore,
to discover what led to Black male success after college. I am hopeful that the identification of variables that allow Black men to succeed after college will add to the literature regarding persistence, role modeling, and successful employment.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

General Perspective

Since very little is known about the success factors that contributed to the academic achievement of college-educated, employed Black male professionals, I determined that a qualitative methodology was the most informative research design to use for this study. Strauss and Corbin (2005) argued that a qualitative research approach provides better chance to (a) uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is known, (b) gain a novel and fresh slant on things about which quite a bit is already known, and (c) give intricate details of a phenomenon that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods. Additionally, Creswell (2009) explained that qualitative inquiry employs a range of different philosophical assumptions and strategies as well as different methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Thus, the present qualitative research study attempted to describe the academic achievement factors that were important to a small group of college-educated, employed Black male professionals using a hermeneutic, phenomenological, qualitative approach.

Hermeneutic, phenomenological, qualitative designs can provide greater insight into the lived experiences of successful Black male professionals. Hermeneutics and phenomenology are human science approaches that are rooted in philosophy; they are philosophies and reflective disciplines (Manen, 1990, p. 7). Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 21). Hermeneutic phenomenological research edifies the personal insight, contributing to one’s thoughtfulness and one’s
ability to act toward others with tact or tactfulness (Manen, 1990, p. 7). Heidegger and Husserl both agreed that originally hermeneutic was used primarily in an attempt to provide surer foundations for the interpretations of biblical text (Smith et al., 2009, p. 21). Today it is used in a wide range of texts, such as historical documents and literacy work. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the study of experience (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 1). Manen (1990) explained that phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences. Phenomenology attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence. Phenomenology claims to be scientific in a broad sense, since it is a systematic, explicit, self-critical, and inter-subjective study of its subject matter, our lived experience. Thus, this qualitative approach represents one of the best ways of capturing the lived experiences of these successful black men (Creswell, 2009).

The goal of this study was to determine what led to the successful college graduation and subsequent employment from the perspectives of a select group of Black male professionals. These Black males consistently participated as mentors to Black male high school students in an Annual Male Empowerment Seminar at a private, independent, urban, not-for-profit, small college in the New York area. Utilizing the anti-deficit achievement framework (see Appendices A, B, and C for the framework, request and conditions to use it, and permissions to use it) developed by Harper (2012), researcher asked questions that focused on the success factors across the three pipelines points (precollege socialization and readiness, college achievement and post college success). In a method similar to Harper’s (2012) study, the participants were asked about the roles of eight researchable dimensions of achievement that led to their college success (familial
factors, K–12 school forces, out-of-school college prep resources, classroom experiences, 
out-of-class engagement, enriching educational experiences, graduate school enrollment, 
and career readiness). In addition, this study added a new pipeline point focusing on 
employment post–college graduation as well as two new researchable dimensions of 
achievement (career choice post–college graduation and career experience).

The research questions that guided this study were

1. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, how do 
   family members nurture and sustain Black male students’ interest in school?

2. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, which college 
   experiences enable Black men to compete successfully for careers in their fields?

3. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, what factors 
   influenced Black Male career choices?

4. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, to what 
   degree are Black male participants currently employed in their desired careers?

Research Context

I am a Black male who founded the male empowerment seminar from which the 
participants were recruited. I have worked in higher education for the last eight years in 
academics, students’ services, and enrollment management.

For this study, I conducted in-depth one-on-one interviews with employed, 
college-educated Black male mentors who consistently participated in male 
empowerment (ME) seminars targeting New York–area Black male high school students 
from 2009 through 2011 at a private, urban college in the Bronx, New York. The ME 
seminars provided an opportunity for Black male students in the New York metropolitan
area who are currently in high school to meet other Black male professionals who at hold least a bachelor’s degree and are currently employed full-time. Given the high degree of underrepresentation of Black males in higher education, particularly within the state of New York, when compared to White males (Holzman, 2004), the present study was strategically designed to examine the success stories of these Black male mentors participating in the ME seminar in this metropolitan area. The goals of the ME seminars are to provide young Black males with stellar examples of Black male professionals who persist through college graduation to successful employment. Each year the seminars begin with the mentors and mentees spending six hours in one-on-one interaction. Each mentor has the opportunity to share their story to inspire these young Black males to pursue college as the most valid option for success.

The participants for this study were selected from a population of 52 college-educated, employed Black male professionals in the ME seminars from 2009 to 2011. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the number of Black male high school student participants, Black male professionals who acted as mentors, and the percentage increase among mentors from 2009 to 2011. As shown in Table 3.1, during the three-year period 2009 to 2011, 52 Black male professionals from many different professional backgrounds, diverse socioeconomical households, and a variety of academic institutions (ranging from small private colleges to prestigious Ivy League universities) served as mentors in the ME seminars (see Appendix D). The researcher choose to study this population because these Black male professionals held at least a bachelor’s degree, were currently employed, and were willing to give back to younger Black male high school students make these men a good representative to study. The ME seminars provided an
opportunity for Black male students in the Metropolitan Area who were currently in high school to meet other Black males who had graduated from college and were currently employed for the purpose of mentoring. Given the high degree of underrepresentation of Black males in higher education, particularly within the state of New York (Holzman, 2004), the study was strategically designed to examine the success stories of the Black male mentors participating in the ME seminar in this metropolitan area.

Program mentors were solicited to participate in the ME seminar through e-mails (see Appendix E) and phone calls from members of the college community. In 2009, from 75 e-mails sent to possible mentors, 20 volunteered as mentors. In 2010, from 102 emails sent to possible mentors, 37 volunteered. In 2011, from 107 emails sent to possible mentors, 52 volunteered. The population of 52 Black male mentors was then invited to participate in the study.

Table 3.1

Male Empowerment Seminar Response 2009–2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>E-mails Sent To Mentors</th>
<th>Mentors Participated</th>
<th>Students Participated</th>
<th>Mentors Increase (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>253</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>(55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>(41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. This table represents communications to Black male mentors between 2009 and 2011.
Research Participants

All 52 mentors from the 2011 population of ME mentors were sent a letter of introduction via e-mail inviting them to participate in the present study (see Appendix F) followed by a Participants Eligibility Questionnaire (PEQ; See Appendix G.). Twenty-two out of the 52 Black males completed the PEQ (a 42% response rate). Basic demographic data were collected from the PEQ. As shown in Table 3.2, a majority of the PEQ respondents were between the ages of 21 and 29 (45%), 21 of them attended public high schools (95.5%), 19 were involved in high school club activities (86.4%), and 63.6% had earned at least a master’s degree. Additionally, a majority of the PEQ Black male respondents indicated that 42.2% of their fathers and 52.2% of the mothers earned at least an associates’ degree. A majority of the PEQ respondents came from two-parent households (68%) and working class families (68%).

Follow-up phone calls were made to the 22 PEQ respondents to encourage participation in the study. The researcher was able to contact, either by phone or e-mail, 21 (98%) PEQ respondents. The researcher contacted the respondents to confirm receipt of the PEQs and to thank them for completing this initial step in the research. Respondents were informed that 10 mentors would be selected for further in-depth interviews.

For the present study, 10 participants were purposely sampled as the final participants. Purposeful sampling or selection allows the researcher to select individuals “because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Typically, the number of qualitative interviews or participants is between 4 to 10 (Smith et al., 2009, p. 52). Thus,
10 out of the 22 PEQ respondents were selected using four selection criteria: the participants (a) came from different academic institutions, (b) were employed in different career fields, (c) were in different age brackets representing a difference of at least 6 years, and (d) came from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The researcher used these selection criteria to give the best chance of gathering richer and wider data from this study.

After using these criteria, 10 participants were identified. The researcher called each identified potential participant to schedule a one-on-one interview at a location of choice specified by the participant. Of the 10 participants, 8 (80%) agreed over the phone to meet with the researcher for one-on-one interview. Two participants decided not to participate in the interviews because of personal reasons. No replacement was selected for these two participants who declined because the number of participants still fell within the acceptable number participants needed for this kind of study. Table 3.2 provides the demographic data of the PEQ.

**Instruments Used in Data Collection**

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used as the data collection method. Using the IPA approach, the researcher designed a series of data collection instruments specifically, a PEQ and interview questions protocol that was used to elicit detailed profiles, stories, thoughts, and feelings from the participants.
Table 3.2

*Participant Eligibility Questionnaire: Demographic Profile of the Black Male Respondents (N = 22)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21–29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or older</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School attended</th>
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<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Highest level of education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement in clubs or activities</th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father’s highest level education</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate or Terminal Professional degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother’s education level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate or Terminal Professional degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family structure growing up</th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Parent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family economic status</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Income</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affluent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Black male mentors participated in the Empowerment seminar for one month in April 2009-2012. The goals of the ME seminars are to provide young black males with stellar example of black males professional who persist through college graduation to successful employment.
Profile eligibility survey. The first instrument employed for data collection was the PEQ (see Appendix G). The purpose and relevancy of this instrument was to provide a demographic profile that was necessary for qualifying the participants for purposeful sampling. The instrument was used as a selection tool for potential participants. The PEQs were sent to the participants through Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com/). Survey monkey is internet-based software with templates and capabilities for researchers to create their own version of instrument. Using this medium allowed easy access and quick response because of its electronic capabilities.

The Survey Monkey version of the PEQ consisted of eight demographic questions. The PEQ was used as a purposeful tool in the selection process of the interviewees. There were eight questions on the PEQ (age, highest level of education, mother’s highest level of education, father’s highest level of education, economic status while growing up, family structure, club and activities involvement, and participant’s high school attended). The data gathered provided some insight on the background of the research participants for specific research questions, however, this research is a qualitative study and the data collected were merely to give an overview of the group studied. The second instrument used in the present study was the interview schedule and protocol.

Interview schedule. The researcher used an interview schedule to help with preparing the content for the interview. The interview schedule consisted of confirming the appointment; testing the equipment, explaining the time commitment, and thanking the participants for participating in the study (See Appendix H.). At the beginning of each interview, the researcher gave an overview of the project to the research participants
and an opportunity to ask questions about the project and their role. An informed consent form was presented to each of the participants for signature of their approval to be interviewed (See Appendix I.). The researcher conducted seven in-person interviews and one phone interview (One of the participants was not available for an in-person interview.).

**Interview protocol.** The researcher used semi-structured one-to-one interview protocols (See Appendix J.) because it is a suitable means for collecting such data (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). According to Smith et al. (2009), a qualitative research interview is often described by researchers as a conversation with purpose. IPA was best suited for this research because it invites participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009, p. 56). The IPA approach suggests that participants be granted the opportunity to tell their stories and to speak freely at length. This approach benefits from detailed engagement with a small sample, from accessing the chosen phenomenon, and the reflective effort of participants (Smith et al. 2012, p. 56). Therefore, the researcher adapted and developed a series of questions as the interview protocols. Utilizing the anti-deficit achievement framework developed by Harper (2012), this study replicated the three pipelines point (precollege socialization and readiness, college achievement, and postcollege success) along with a fourth pipeline point (employment post-college graduation) developed by the researcher.

There were 26 questions involved in the interview process (See Appendix J.). All questions were designed from Harper’s three pipelines: precollege socialization and readiness, classroom experiences, and postcollege success. Harper’s anti-deficit framework was chosen because of the relevancy and the appropriateness of the questions.
to elicit information from Black males. Under the fourth pipeline, which was added and developed for the purposes of this study, the researcher asked six additional questions. The time of interviews varied from 45 to 90 minutes.

**Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis**

Each of the eight interviews was audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and downloaded to an electronic folder as a digital file. After each interview, the researcher recorded personal notes reflecting on the most relevant points. The recorded interviews were electronically converted into completed transcripts by the researcher. This type of detailed data could not be collected through other data collection methods, such as surveys. According to Creswell (2009), results should be evaluated for patterns across stories, experiences, and perspectives for a deeper understanding of how specific factors influenced the participants. The researcher analyzed the data collected during the interviews during the data analysis process.

Smith et al. (2009, p.79) explained that data analysis in qualitative research focuses on and directs analytic attention to making sense of the participants’ experiences. Smith (2007) describes the analytical process as an iterative and inductive cycle. The researcher used a close line-by-line analysis of the experiential data by reading the transcripts multiple times and coded them accordingly. The researcher created a codebook to consistently identify any emergent patterns from a single participant and then across multiple participants. Through this analytical process, statements of meanings were identified, then placed into clusters. From those clusters, emergent themes were identified. The researcher developed a structure, frame gestalt that illustrates the relationships between themes as suggested by (Smith et al., 2009). The organization of
this material in this format allowed analyzed data to be traced directly through the process, from initial comment to transcript. Through initial clustering of these themes and thematic development, a final structure of the themes was created.

Validation and independent readers. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data analysis, the researcher employed an independent evaluator, as suggested by Creswell (2009, p. 191), to review the process of data collection, the results and conclusion, and provide feedback to the researcher. The independent evaluator was chosen because of her extensive knowledge in qualitative research and her academic credentials. The independent reader provided a report with her own themes. A detail analysis and comparisons were conducted to validate consistency or divergence of themes. The comparison led to 85% confirmation of the themes identified by the researcher during the thematic analysis. Once the data were tested for reliability and validity and found to be so, the researcher developed a full narrative evidenced by detailed commentary, which took the reader through this interpretation, theme by theme, and supported by a visual aids, as suggested by Smith et al. (2009, p. 79). The results are presented in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4: Results

Research Questions

This research study examined success factors and experiences of college-educated, employed Black males who participated in an annual ME Seminars from 2009 to 2012. These seminars were held at an independent, urban private college in New York. This research focuses on four pipelines points (precollege socialization and readiness, college achievement, postcollege success, and employment postgraduation). The first three pipelines (precollege socialization and readiness, college achievement, postcollege success) were adapted from Harper’s (2012) anti-deficit framework and the fourth (employment pregraduation) was developed by the researcher. Ten researchable dimensions of achievements were used in this study. The first eight researchable dimensions of achievements (familial factors, K–12 school forces, out-of-school college prep resources, classroom experiences, out-of-class engagement, enriching educational experiences, graduate school enrollment, career readiness) were structured under the first three pipeline points (precollege socialization and readiness, college achievement, postcollege success and employment postgraduation). Two researchable dimensions of achievements (career choice postgraduation and career experience) were developed by the researcher under the fourth pipeline (employment post–college graduation).

The men who participated in the study were college-educated, employed Black males who hold at least a bachelor’s degree. The Black males came from many different professional backgrounds, diverse socioeconomical households, and a variety of
academic institutions ranging from small private colleges to prestigious Ivy League universities (Appendix D). This research study examined success factors and experiences of the participants using a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative approach. The primary data collection tool was an in-depth, semi-structured, one-on-one interview. A pre-interview questionnaire, PEQ, was used to collect demographic data and served as a selection criteria tool.

The four research questions that guided this study were

1. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, how do family members nurture and sustain Black male students’ interest in school?

2. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, which college experiences enable Black men to compete successfully for careers in their fields?

3. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, what factors influenced Black Male career choices?

4. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, to what degree are Black male participants currently employed in their desired careers?

**Data Analysis and Findings**

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater insight and capture lessons learned from college educated employed Black males. Twenty-two of the 52 (42%) responded to the PEQ and were eligible to be interviewed in the study. The following four selection criteria were used to identify the 10 interviewees: the participants (a) came from different academic institutions, (b) were employed in different career fields, (c) represented a different age range, and (d) came from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Ten (45.5%) of the 22 respondents who completed the questionnaire were purposefully
selected for one-on-one interviews. Of the 10 participants, 8 (80%) agreed over the phone to meet with the researcher for one-on-one interviews.

The demographic comparison between the 22 respondents and the 8 interviewees is described in Table 4.1. More than 45% of the 22 respondents were between the ages of 21 and 29, which led to the researcher interviewing more respondents from this age range than any other range. Three (38.8%) of the interviewees were between the age of 21 and 29, while the remaining age groups, with the exception of the range 30–39, were evenly represented by 12%. Twenty-one (95.5%) of the respondents attended public high school. Seven of the interviewees attended public high school and one attended a private high school. Seven (32%) of the respondents earned a bachelor’s degree, 14 (64%) earned master degree and 1 (4.5%) earned a doctorate or professional degree. When compared to those interviewed, 5 (60%) of the interviewees had earned at least a master’s degree, 2 earned bachelor’s degrees, and 1 a professional degree. When asked about their involvement in clubs or extracurricular activities during high school or college an overwhelming 86.4% of the respondents indicated that they were involved in some form. The data also showed that 7 of the 8 interviewees participated in clubs or other activities outside the class room

As seen in Table 4.2, 10 (45%) of the respondents’ fathers attended college, while 8 (36.4%) had some high school experience and 4 (18%) did not know the highest level of degree held by their father. Comparing the highest level of education of the respondents’ mothers to the fathers’, there were no significant differences. Thirty eight percent of the interviewees’ fathers’ highest level of education was some high school.
Four (50%) of the interviewees’ fathers earned a degree and only one did not know their fathers’ highest level of education.

Table 4.1

Demographic Comparison of the Black Male Mentor Respondents and Selected Interviewees from the Male Empowerment Seminar from 2009 to 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents and interviewees by age group</th>
<th>All Respondents ($n = 22$)</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
<th>Interviewees ($n = 8$)</th>
<th>% of Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21–29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>30–39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 or older</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents and interviewees by high school attended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents and interviewees by high school attended</th>
<th>All Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>% of Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents and interviewees by highest level of education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents and interviewees by highest level of education</th>
<th>All Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>% of Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents and interviewees by clubs or activities involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents and interviewees by clubs or activities involvement</th>
<th>All Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>% of Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2

Demographic Comparison of the Parents and Familial Conditions of the Black Male Mentor Respondents and Selected Interviewees from the Male Empowerment Seminar from 2009 to 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents and interviewees by father’s level education</th>
<th>All Respondents (n = 22)</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
<th>Interviewees (n = 8)</th>
<th>% of Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate or Professional degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents and interviewees by mother’s education level</th>
<th>All Respondents (n = 22)</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
<th>Interviewees (n = 8)</th>
<th>% of Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate or Terminal Professional degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents and interviewees by family structure growing up</th>
<th>All Respondents (n = 22)</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
<th>Interviewees (n = 8)</th>
<th>% of Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Parent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents and interviewees by family economic status growing up</th>
<th>All Respondents (n = 22)</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
<th>Interviewees (n = 8)</th>
<th>% of Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Income</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affluent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were clear differences with the number of respondents that knew their mothers’ highest level of education compared to their fathers’ highest level. Four (18.2%) did not know their father’s highest level of education compared to one (4.5%) that did not

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41
know his mother’s highest level of education. These statistics could be illuminating the disappointing data that points to lack of fathers in many African American households. The interviewees’ mothers’ highest level of education was evenly distributed in the three lowest categories. Some high school 25%, associate degree 25%, and bachelor’s degree 25%, while only one had a master’s degree and one a professional degree.

Fifteen (68.2%) of the respondents grew up in a two-parent household and considered themselves a working class family. Four (18.2%) grew up in single-family household and 3 (14%) had a family structure other than two parents or single parent. Four of the eight interviewees came from two-parent households and of the remaining four, 50% came from single-parent household. The other two came from an undefined household. The data on family economic status shows that working class is the most dominant with 68%, while the remaining categories were evenly distributed (14%) among low income, middle class, and affluent. More interviewees were selected from working class than any other working group as they represented the largest number of family economic status.

**Interview data.** The interviews resulted in 6 hr 35 min of taped interviews and 580 pages of transcripts. The researcher then conducted a detailed data analysis that led to identification of 116 statements of meaning.

**Identification of themes.** To assist in identifying the themes for this study, an excel sheet, to represent a codebook, was created by the researcher and both inductive and deductive processes were used. Figure 4.1 presents the process by which the 116 statements of meaning were deduced to clusters, themes, research questions and pipeline points.
As seen in Figure 4.1, the first part of this section was organized by research questions and the major findings are discussed and highlighted based on the relevancy to the phenomenon under each question. Last, the researcher summarizes the findings, which are presented in a narrative and tables to illustrate the phenomenon. The interviews were read by the researcher, statements of meaning were identified, and possible themes were highlighted. The transcripts were given to an independent reader, who identified statements of meaning without any influence from the researcher. The independent reader’s statements of meaning were compared with the researcher statements of meaning. From the comparison and evaluation of both statements of meaning, a final list of the major statements of meaning were identified. These were then grouped by
frequency and relevancy to the phenomenon under study and then were categorized as major themes under each research question. There were 116 statements of meaning, 25 clusters of meaning and 9 major themes.

Five columns were created. The first column represented statements of meaning, the second frequencies, the third themes, the fourth research questions, and the final column represented pipeline points. From the statements of meaning, themes were identified and then totaled by frequencies and then grouped into clusters. The clusters were then mapped to the research questions under each pipeline point. Under the first pipeline point (precollege socialization and readiness), there were nine clusters (parental involvement in education, precollege programs, guidance counselor very involved, family involvement, advance classes, student club involvement, college tours, relationship with advisor, college advisor). The second pipeline point (college achievement) there were five clusters (relationship with faculty, concerns about loans, involved in extracurricular activities, need for degree specialization, tutored in college). The third pipeline point (precollege success) had four clusters (personal drive, experienced negative stereotype, involved in campus organization, unprepared for some classes). The final pipeline point (employment postgraduation) had six clusters (worked while in school, having a career mentor, culture shock, did internship, involved in professional group, understanding workplace politics).

Research Question 1: How do family members nurture and sustain Black male students’ interest in school? This research question is derived from Harper’s (2012) first pipeline (precollege socialization and readiness) and was designed to address familial factors, K–12 school forces, and out-of-college prep resources effects on
participants in this study. This question generated nine themes: (a) family and parental involvement in education (b) precollege programs (c) guidance counselor very involved, (d) advance classes (e) student club involvement, (f) college tours, (j) relationship with advisor, (l) college advisor). Four of these themes (precollege programs and advance classes, student club involvement, family involvement, parental involvement in education), based on frequency and relevancy, were identified as major themes under this research question.

Major Theme 1: These college-educated, employed Black male mentors were often enrolled in precollege programs and advanced placement courses in high school.

For this study, precollege programs and advanced classes were defined as any academic enrichment activities outside of the minimum required to complete high school. The majority of the programs and courses described in this study were held at the state and local level, free of cost to the participants. There were also privately owned organizations and college that held several of these programs at a cost. Interviewee 4 said,

Okay, so for several summers I ended up doing academic enrichment programs. So, the earliest one I can remember, I know I did a program at John’s Hopkins maybe the summer after eighth grade. I did Boys State. I did, there’s a program in New Jersey called Governor’s School, the one at Rutgers was the engineering school.

Interviewee 5 noted that he found precollege programs to be important. He said,

You know, another good program I was a part of in high school was a program put on by Delta Sigma Theta. It was for high school students where they had
programs once a month that just talked about things like college. They did a college tour, and they had workshops on different things.

The Black males interviewed referred to different types as programs. They were more vocal about programs that gave them the opportunity to visit colleges. Interviewee 7 said,

Yes, they had, we used to do college tours, and then we also had different programs like the Upward Bound program, where people from different colleges used to come and speak with us. 'Cause I was very interested about the college experience, you know, and what it was like to live on a campus and in a dorm and writing term papers, and, you know, just studying and just developing academically.

It was clearly noted by Interviewee 2 that his interest in college grew because of the outside classroom programs that prepared him for college.

Yeah, so in terms of me getting interest about college and learning more about colleges, it had to be because of programs I was involved with outside of school, such as a program called Delta Teen, such as a program with the NAACP for high school students.

Precollege programs and advanced classes were very important to shape the dreams of these men. It was clear that irrespective of the environment, they grew up in or around the socioeconomic background they came from, providing access to precollege programs and advanced classes were an influential tool to shape their college desires.
Interviewee 1 said,

As I went into high school and as I got into high school I upgraded basically to the higher levels and that’s your AP [advanced placement] classes and AP history and all those things. Those helped me to get myself prepared for college.

Interviewee 4 said,

Well there was this: it was actually a program that I ended up in. A couple of my friends that were from the neighborhood that I actually ended up meeting at the public high school, they were a part of a program that runs by the Harlem Children’s Zone before it got it’s notoriety at Countee Cullen. This is on 144th between Frederick Douglass and Adam Clayton Powell, and they were also part of this program called TRUCE. I cannot remember what the acronym stands for at this point, but it was like a college success program. So they had us go through practice SAT classes and just like some college prep courses.

An academic environment that presents these males with a challenge to reach for something bigger than a high school diploma was a vital tool in their desire to go college. These men expressed how structured and rigorous academic programs set the stage for their continued interest in learning. While precollege programs and advance classes were vital tools toward their success, the interviewees also expressed how their involvement in students’ club organizations played an important role in their success.

**Major Theme 2: These college-educated, employed, Black male mentors often participated in student clubs and organizations.** For the purpose of this study, students’ clubs and organizations were defined as any organized group that is designed to bring students together outside of the classroom for a learning experience. There were several
students’ club organizations mentioned by the interviewees. The participants interviewed felt that in many ways these clubs and organizations were very helpful in exposing them to different valuable experiences.

Interviewee 7 said,

Then, as I said, I played basketball in the PAL, Police Athletic League and I came across different positive individuals. And through all my life, I can honestly say, I’ve been blessed to come in contact with different individuals. I kept being exposed to a certain group of men, when I used to box, I played basketball, football and a lot of these individuals were members of a Black fraternity called Omega Psi Phi, which is one of the divine nine, it was founded in 1911. I’ve met a lot of inspirational people in that organization, which influenced me like with the Big Brother program, and then eventually I became a member of the fraternity and we used to feed the homeless shelters and things like that. And that was another thing: that my family was big in community service. That helped to really shape me to see where I wanted to go in life and what direction I wanted to pursue.

Interviewee 2 said, “Hey, I was involved in sports, too, in high school. I ran track, you know, fall season, winter season, but I still pushed myself to do extra things outside of the classroom.” Interviewee 5 said, “Yes, so when I was growing up I always was very active in organizations in my hometown. Usually doing like mentoring and helping with homework and projects on the weekends and what not.”

The interviewees mentioned that their involvement in athletics programs was very helpful in keeping them focused. Interview 6 said,
I guess one thing would be playing basketball, you know, being a student athlete. The year I did not play was like sophomore year, but I played the other three years and that prepared me just to be able to manage time between practice, class and homework, and all the other stuff.

During the interviews, the participants stressed that their involvement in students’ club organizations, on or off school grounds, was an important instrument in helping them to have a balanced approach to success. Their interpretation of a balanced approach was evident by their explanations that it was not all about academics, because their participation in students’ club organizations helped them to be a well-rounded person as well as fueled their desire to accomplish more on a personal level. The interviewees also shared the importance to them of extended family member’s involvement and parental involvement in education. That involvement played a significant role in their own personal expectations in education.

Major Theme 3: These college-educated, employed, Black male mentors had consistent family and parental involvement throughout high school and college. For the purpose of this study family and parental involvement was defined as any support from relatives towards a desired educational outcome. Each Black male interviewed credited some member of their family for giving them the support. Five (52.45%) of the Black males interviewed credited their mother specifically, and only two mentioned their father. Other family members were also mentioned as giving guidance and support.

Interviewee 8 said, “My mom inspired me to go to college and to do something positive with my life, because my goal was to make her life easy.” Interviewee 7 said,
Other family members reinforced that, and even though my mother died young and my father wasn’t there as much as he could have been. But, I always had somebody there that was pushing me. My family always supported any endeavor that I was trying to do as far as being positive, and that was very vital and, you know, in later years, because I knew if I put my head to something, that I want to go take care of business, they were going to be behind me to support me.

Interviewee 6 said,

It wasn’t really a choice. I’m first-generation Nigerian, so my mom, dad, everyone else was born in Nigeria. Me and my sister were born here and so born in Queens, you know. My dad always had a job, my mom always had a job, so for me it was really what are you going to do after college. Like already knew that was going to happen. What are you going to do after, be a lawyer, doctor, accountant, pharmacist; those were really the only options. So it wasn’t really a choice to go to school, so I had to go to school. So it wasn’t really motivation, it was more so intimidation.

Interviewee 6, who grew up in a working class family, the insinuation of respect and fear over motivation was evident. The interviewee stated that college was not an option, it was necessary and his parents would do whatever was required of them to ensure he got to college. He knew that there would not be any valid discussion about putting off college under any circumstances; his parents made it clear that was his ticket to success. Interviewee 5, who came from a different socioeconomic background, was also given the same message. His parents were affluent. Interviewee 5 said,
So, both of my parents are first-generation college and graduate school. So growing up college was a kind of nonconclusion. Going into high school, I knew I was going to college, it was a matter of which college I was going to and what I was going to study, but there was never an option for me not to continue my education after high school.

Interviewee 2 said,

Just by being supportive, you know, like I said, my mother she’s about education. They always showed us that education is a valuable tool, it’s very important, you know, even though my father never finished school. But they always instilled a solid education in us. They came here to give us that opportunity of a better life. My mother, she raised two kids, she got her bachelor’s degree. So going to college was, you know, that was the mission, the goal.

Interviewee 4 said,

I come from a single parent home, was actually raised by my grandmother, my mother wasn’t a big part of my life and I never knew my father and so college for me at the time wasn’t something that I was really focused on. When I graduated high school I had a summer job, I was making a little bit of money and for me I felt why would I go to college, people go to college to make money and I’m making money now and my grandmother was really adamant about me going to college. It was something that was really going to make her happy and that heavily influenced my decision to go. Yeah, and I loved her dearly and that was something she wanted. So it was one of those things that I was going to go and I never really thought it, you know, I’d been in school my entire life and it’s just
one of those, it’s the next schooling and she made me go to school in elementary,
she made me go to high school, that’s just how it went, you know, go to college, I
wasn’t going to question it.

The evidence of family and parental involvement, student organization
participation, along with precollege programs played a tremendous role in the success of
these Black males. Though the participants came from various backgrounds,
economically, socially, and academically they were all influenced by either their parents
or one of their parents; some family member who instilled into them the importance of
education. When asked about who sustained their interest in education, 90% of the
interviewees gave credit to multiple family members. Student organizations, such as PAL
and others, as basic as track and field, provided a support group that kept them focused
and taught them responsibility. The final supporting theme that drove these research
questions was precollege programs and advanced classes. All the interviewees mentioned
an opportunity to participate in the kind of setting gave them an early edge when
compared to their peers, who did not have the same access or who choose not to
participate.

**Research Question 2: Which college experiences enable Black men to**
compete successfully for careers in their fields? This research question falls under the
second pipeline point, college achievement. It addressed the participant’s relationship
with their peers and faculty with some illumination of how it may have affected their
success. This research question generated four themes: (a) relationship with faculty, (b)
extracurricular activities, (c) need for degree specialization, and (d) tutored in college.
Relationship with faculty and extracurricular activities involvement were identified as
major themes based on their frequency and other inductive reasons obtained by the researcher during the interview.

**Major Theme 1: These college-educated, full-time employed, Black male mentors reported having ongoing, close relationships with college faculty members who encouraged their academic and career success.** For the purpose of this study, relationship with faculty was described as a constant dialogue between a student and an instructor, with an emphasis on improving academic and career outcomes. The interviewee who had a constant dialogue with instructor around careers and academic expectation found that they were better able to navigate the job market and had more insight on what is required in a specific career field.

Interviewee 1 said,

I had an advisor, his name was Patrick Donahue, he was a former Eastern Airlines 727 captain. So, he worked at Embry-Riddle, he’s an old guy but very knowledgeable, so he was my advisor throughout the four years that I was there, but he also was a teacher. So I think if I hadn’t had these relationships with these people, I would have probably been sitting down being maybe lackadaisical about things or not going to career fairs like they’d advise, or things like that. So they really encouraged me to be active and to participate in a lot of the social events that our school brought into the campus. He was an interesting guy, because he was funny, so, you know, you’d go and get some advisement from him and you tell him, well I’d be telling him “hey, you know, I’d like to take these courses next year.” So he’d direct me as far as what he thought I wanted to get, what my end goal was. So he’d say, “You know, you don’t need this class, because in
reality, if you want to get here, if you want to work with this company or be in an airline industry in this field then you should take these classes.” So the relationship really helped me to get to where I am now basically.

**Major Theme 2: These college-educated, full-time employed, Black male mentors were involved in extracurricular activities.** For the purpose of this study, extracurricular activities involvement was defined as any involvement in a purposeful enriching activity that may give an opportunity to put theory into practice. Many of the participants in the study credited their involvement in extracurricular activities as the impetus for their view on social justice. They also viewed extracurricular activities as an opportunity to be meaningfully engaged during their most impressionable years.

Interviewee 3 said,

Yeah, I became active with NABA, which is the National Association of Black Accountants, and I was the treasurer or our school’s chapter. So around this time, this is when I really started getting really active. I went to NABA’s national conference and did campus events. We invite alumni back to just come and talk and talk about their careers, talk about their career paths and career options.

Interviewee 8 said,

One of the things that we did at City College, we did internships at a lower eastside organization called MFY Legal Services. At MFY Legal Services, I did what they called fair hearings for people on public assistance were denied a public assistant benefit. In order to get their benefits restated they are to go to these hearings, so I did that. And after my internship ended, I continued to do it,
because I felt it was a need, it was needed in the community, and I enjoyed doing that. And that gave me step in my career.

The experiences gathered through extracurricular activities were of immense help to these Black males. They felt that these activities provided them with the fundamental insight they needed in order to compete in their career fields. Taking part in extracurricular activities helped them find another way of dealing with life issues and provided practical training that ultimately helped them in the real world.

**Research Question 3: What factors influenced Black male career choices?**

This research question falls under the third pipeline point (precollege success) and addressed the participants’ desire beyond baccalaureate study and their level of career readiness coming out of college. There were two major themes: early career exposure through part-time jobs and internships. On the subject of what influenced their decision to go to graduate school or pursue their desired career choice these were the driving factors.

*Major Theme: These college-educated, employed, Black male mentors reported early career exposure through part-time jobs and/or internships while in college.* Early exposure through part-time jobs or internships had some effect on future aspirations.

Interviewee 4 said,

I worked in several retail jobs, worked at the Hershey Store, worked at Block Buster, I worked at Hollywood Video, I worked at Daffy’s. Eventually, I ended up working at Commerce Bank, before it was TD Bank, and that was my last full time job that before I started doing internships and such. At that point, there was one consistent theme for me that was my driving force of staying in college, and it was looking around shoulder to shoulder with my peers at the workplace and
seeing people who were twice my age making the same amount of money as I because they had no degrees.

Interviewee 4 said,

What I was fortunate enough to do is, while in John Jay I was taking Civil Service exams. I was encouraged by my professors to take Civil Service exams. So I took, maybe, I’d say, maybe, 8 to 9 different Civil Service exams. I took fire department, corrections, police, I took train conductor all of those different things, and I was a freshman at the time. I was getting many calls but I had already been working for a private security company. But then I started getting calls and I was able to get a city job. I got a city job working in the Public Safety Department in CUNY, City University of New York; I was working at Bronx Community College. Those experiences really helped me decided to go into law enforcement.

Interviewee 2 said,

No, I didn’t have any college experience that helped me out when it comes to find a career path, but, you know, I didn’t take advantage of them, I didn’t do internships in college, you know. I just always worked part time cause I wanted to earn additional money. I worked on campus and I worked part time, like at Best Buy, to take care of, you know, I had a car. I had to put gas and pay a few bills.

Interview 3 said,

I was with at JP Morgan for a little while and that really exposed me to many different areas of the world and different industries, which really opened my eyes to the world of possibilities for my career.
The findings illuminate a strong relationship between early work experience, internship opportunities, and current career fields. Their experiences working in different environments served as a motivating factor that helped shaped their choices on what career field they should pursue.

Research Question 4: To what degree are Black males currently employed in their desired careers? This research question falls under the fourth pipeline point (employment pregraduation). The fourth pipeline point was developed by the researcher to build on Harper’s (2012) study. This pipeline addressed the Black male participant’s career choice pregraduation and career experiences. There were three interlocking themes: (a) culture shock, (b) understanding work place politics, and (c) career mentor, Six (60%) of the interviewees expressed some form of culture shock during their first job experience. A few even went on to explain how not knowing what to expect, when going into a certain career, held them back from making the right decisions earlier. The interviewees constantly referred to alignment of poor career choices with lack of career mentorship.

Major Theme 1: These college-educated, employed, Black male mentors reported culture shock with respect to lower than expected salaries and limited professional growth opportunities during their entry-level jobs after graduating from college. For the purpose of this study, culture shock is defined as personal disorientation experienced by the interviewee due to a change in social and professional environment. There were two varied reactions from the participants based on their exposures to the workforce. Participants who have had experience through internship expressed less shock during the earlier part of their career. There were also a few participants whose expected
earnings did not match the industry standard. This could be lack of research on their career field by the individual.

Interviewee 3 said,

My expectations were way above what the reality is at least in my experience. I thought, and this is one of the questions you asked earlier is what I was trying to explain. I came out of college thinking I would be making like $70,000 a year doing very important things, you know, making a change in the world because, you know, a lot of people, especially those who are educated, want to come out and do something major and do something big, you know. That was my impression. It did not really work out that way. I had to take something outside of where I really wanted to be.

**Major Theme 2: These college-educated, full-time employed, Black male mentors reported that understanding work place politics was very important to their professional growth within their organizations.** For the purpose of this study *work place politics* is defined as the culture norms and beliefs of the organization, and the complexities that come with maneuvering within such structures. The reaction from the participants when asked if they had been exposed to workplace politics and how it may have affected their performance came with a straight answer: some participants felt workplace politics never affected them, because they stayed above the internal bureaucracy, but others made it clear that it significantly affected the way they had been evaluated.
Interviewee 5 said,

I’m being honest; people thought I was in my job because of affirmative action. I know people that thought that. I am probably one of the smartest people in the room, once people get past color, I just completely dominate in many areas. I’ve been very, very blessed with talents and resources and of the like, so I make sure to say, “I’m here because I’ve earned this spot not because I’m the Black guy.” However, sometimes Blacks are not working in their desired fields, because it is dominated by other groups, and getting in is most times difficult.

**Major Theme 3: These college-educated, full-time employed, Black male mentors described the importance of a career mentor for providing expertise advice, and career information.** For the purpose of this study *career mentor* is defined as an experienced individual providing guidance, instructions, and access to areas of their expertise. During the interviews, seven (87.5%) of the participants referred to or implied the importance of their career mentors. They felt that individuals with career mentors were able to navigate the professional world much quicker. Also mentioned was that those individuals who have career mentors are sometimes paid more in actual compensation and are exposed to more opportunities in the company.

Interviewee 3 said,

Immensely, because the result that we are all looking for is a secure sustainable lifestyle, you know, a sustainable career and you see, there is so many things that influence Black culture and you think of the music and entertainment, but there is more. We go into sports or entertainment, and it is usually in a chace of money,
which is really in a chase of security. Many of us is not employed in our careers, we are in it because it might be the only thing available.

Summary of Results

The findings described lessons learned from college-educated, employed Black males and their perceptions of what tools were most important in helping them to succeed. The research highlighted their transition from college to the workforce and what mechanisms they developed to succeed in those environments. The men described in their own words how family support, precollege programs, guidance counselor involvement, relationships with faculty, internships, and other cognitive factors influenced their progression, persistence, and success in life.

Family support was a resounding theme throughout the interviews. The men clearly viewed their desire to complete high school and go on to college as a result of family influence. Their family expectations of their education goals encouraged them to stay focused, overcome challenges and societal negative expectations, and to strive for excellence in pursuit of an education. It is important to note that nearly half of the participants came from homes where their mothers had not attained a bachelor’s degree but were still the driving force behind these men to pursue college. Although they had no firsthand experience with higher education, these parents cultivated within their children a belief that college is the most important step after high school.

The participants viewed precollege programs as the single most important factor after family support. The participants clearly stated how their parents and family members would seek out academically enriched programs such as tutoring in after-school programs, academic support groups, college bound initiatives, and, even, organizations
that taught volunteerism to ensure that their sons were being exposed to all the facets of life that would help to compete both academically and professionally. It is worth noting that all of the interviewed participants attended some kind of precollege program or enrichment program. The socioeconomic make-up of the participants’ families was described as 68.2% working class. The three other categories—low income, affluent, and middle income—had an even distribution of 13.6%. This economic breakdown did not play a part in the exposure to precollege programs because many of these programs were given at no cost to parents.

Guidance counselor involvement chronologically would be considered the third best investment for Black male according to the interviewees. Having guidance counselors that go beyond their core responsibilities, to show both discipline and nurture was extremely helpful. Even with family support, the interviewees felt that having a nonfamily person to confide in was helpful. It provided them with what one interviewee considered a “not emotional way” to get an opinion on issues or support without the drama.

Relationships with faculty were considered the most helpful resources Black male students could access once in college. The interviewees expressed that having an academic relation with a faculty member kept them involved and engaged in the school community. Their same-sex peer was also helpful, but having a faculty who expected you to produce at a high level was significant in their academic pursuits. Seven (87.5%) of the interviewees had relationships with faculty that influenced their performance and career decisions. The participants felt that faculty could have given them first-hand experiences, connected them with organizations, and advocated on their behalf if needed.
However, even with knowing this, the participants felt it was challenging to build those relationships. There were not many same-race instructors in many of the schools, outside of HBCUs, and faculty normally draw to a selected few.

Internship, as described by many of the participants, provided them with an opportunity to be exposed to the different careers and to gain early understanding about workplace politics. Some of the interviewees explained their regrets for not participating in internship opportunities, while others boasted how helpful the internship experience was to their career. Interviewee 2 said, “If I had done an internship in my field, I would have realized that working in a high pressure financial field was not for me.” Several of the men felt that their internship opportunity gave them an edge over their competitors when they entered the real world, to pursue their careers.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the implications of the present findings, study limitations, recommendations, and conclusion. In 2012, Dr. Shaun Harper, an expert on Black males’ success, created the anti-deficit framework by focusing on the educational journey of successful Black males. He did this by asking questions that focused on what went well. These questions were structured under three pipeline points (precollege socialization and readiness, college achievement, and postcollege success) as well eight researchable dimensions of achievement (familial factors, K–12 school forces, out-of-school college prep resources, classroom experiences, out-of-class engagement, enriching educational experiences, graduate school enrollment, and career readiness). Harper (2012) encouraged future researchers to move beyond deficit perspectives on achievement, by highlighting persons, policies, programs, and resources that help Black males succeed and to explore how social factors (for example, poverty and access to healthcare) influence their educational outcomes. This research also expanded Harper’s (2012) research by creating one additional pipeline point (employment postgraduation) and two additional researchable measureable dimensions (career experience and career readiness).

There is limited research on Black males’ successful journey from high school through college to career success. This study is appropriate because it creates an opportunity for Black males’ mentors to tell their experiences of navigating the academic
pipeline to successful careers. Using a qualitative approach gave the Black male mentors a medium to share their stories, experiences, and realities in a riveting way that could not be captured in a quantitative study.

Therefore, the present study addressed the call for future research and added to the existing research (Harper 2012; Bonner 2009) by focusing on the factors, themes, and experiences that lead to Black males’ success. Thus, the goal of the present research was to investigate what a select group of college-educated, employed, Black male mentors considered helpful to them before college, in and out of the college classroom, and at the career post–college graduation. The qualitative study used four research questions to explore factors that lead to college access, persistence, and degree completion for a sample of eight college-educated, professional, Black male mentors. These eight mentors were interviewed by the researcher using in-depth open-ended qualitative interviews that addressed each of the following research questions:

1. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, how do family members nurture and sustain Black male students’ interest in school?

2. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, which college experiences enable Black men to compete successfully for careers in their fields?

3. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, what factors influenced Black Male career choices?

4. According to college-educated, employed Black male mentors, to what degree are Black male participants currently employed in their desired careers?
Implications of Findings

This study expanded on the limited literature that is available on Black male’s success. Research Question 1 focused on how Black male mentors sustained their interest in education, how it was nurtured, and how they were inspired to pursue college education. This question led to several themes and different analytical perspectives that in most cases support the literature review, specifically those of Harper (2012) and Bonner (2009).

Research Question 1: How do family members nurture and sustain Black male students’ interest in school? Overall, these college-educated, employed Black male mentors reported that their families members (a) tended to nurture and sustain their interest in school by encouraging them to them to participate in precollege programs and/or advanced placement classes while in high school and (b) showed a constant interest in their school activities and challenges prior to college.

These college-educated, full-time employed, Black male mentors reported that precollege programs and advanced placements in high school are instrumental in the Black male’s success. The participants clearly stated that they were always involved in these activities from an early age. During the present interviews, 100 % of the participants in the study indicated that these preprograms (e.g., engineering classes, business classes) opened the gateway for meeting the right people. The participants explained how they viewed Black males who took these preprograms or advance placements classes in high school as progressive and how it helped to create a camaraderie that pushed them to succeed in life. Seven out of the eight participants felt that the experiences they received from taking precollege programs and advanced
placement classes provided them with a positive view of themselves and equipped them with the early academic preparation they needed to do well in college. Although the participants came from different socioeconomic backgrounds, their different origins did not stop them from accessing these resources because most of these programs and classes are available no cost to families.

Here is how one of the participants expressed his involvement in precollege programs: “For several summers I ended up doing academic enrichment programs. The earliest one I can remember [was] at John’s Hopkins, maybe the summer after eighth grade.” The participants explained that precollege programs and advanced classes helped them gain an academic edge on their peers in school, and they felt better prepared to attend and succeed in college.

The factors of precollege programs and advanced placement classes found in the present study are consistent with previous studies by Harper (2012) and Bonner (2009) on Black male success. Harper (2012) and Bonner (2009) highlighted the importance of precollege programs and advanced placement classes. In his national Black male achievement study, Harper (2012) found that 49.3% had taken an advanced placement course in high school, a figure that is low, but shows the impact of these programs. Bonner (2009) noted that many Black males who are considered gifted were discovered after their involvement in precollege programs or in advanced classes. The participants in this study expressed how structured and rigorous academic programs set the stage for their continued interest in learning. Bonner (2010) stated that Black male positive perception of self is important at an early age. This is why exposing Black males early to
precollege programs and advanced classes will help build confidence and encourage early academic desires in their formative years.

The findings point to a need for more precollege programs and advanced placement classes at an early age. Parents should have more information and access to these programs. The implications are further magnified by the results from this study; all eight participants mentioned the importance to of precollege programs and advanced classes. Black males that participate in these programs are more prepared for college and are more likely to remain at a higher level.

There are also some implications for colleges in the area of retention. Students are more likely to feel confident having taken a precollege program or advanced course and have a better opportunity to perform well in college and less likely to drop out of college. Colleges will also benefit from incoming students having to take fewer remediation classes. While precollege programs and advanced classes were dynamic tools used to help them establish success, the interviewees also expressed how their involvement in students’ club organizations also played an important role.

**These college-educated, full-time employed, Black male mentors were encouraged to participate in student clubs and organizations.** All participants were members of student clubs and organizations. During the interview, the participants identified several organizations that are currently in existence at various college campuses. Black Greek organizations and fraternities were often mentioned, however, there were several academic clubs such as National Association of Black Accountants that had notable reckoning. The participants interviewed felt that in many ways these clubs and organizations were very helpful in exposing them to different valuable
experiences. Many of the participants believed being part of these organizations gave them an opportunity to be with students that had similar values, a commonality of success factor also found in Harper (2012) study.

Many of the participants stated that being a part of an organization or just taking part in out-of-the-classroom activities gave them a sense of belonging. This correlates with Harper’s (2012) national study on Black male achievers that found that students who are actively engaged in educationally purposeful activities and experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, are more likely than are their disengaged peers to persist through graduation” (Harper & Quaye, 2009, p. 4).

Two of the participants reported difficulties adjusting and feeling a part of the university during their first years, but credited their adjustment to participating in student organizations on campus. Many of the participants in this study go on to explain that there were life skills that can be gained beyond college by being a part of these organizations. Some benefits described were cognitive, such as critical thinking skills, moral and ethical development, practical competence, and racial and gender identity development.

The findings suggest that colleges need to be creative in getting students to be a part of students’ organizations. The literature shows that students who are involved in clubs are most likely to graduate. It also suggests the need for these clubs to be more inclusive and to be introduced to students even at the high school level.

Additionally, institutions of higher education should collaborate with K–12 education systems to design and launch in high school the same clubs that already exist in
colleges and universities. Black males who are in college and have the desire could serve as role models to younger generations.

**These college-educated, employed, Black male mentors were encouraged by consistent parental and family involvement in education.** One hundred percent of Black males interviewed credited some member of their family for giving them the support. Though the participants came from various backgrounds, economically, socially, and academically, they were all influenced by one or both parents, or some family member, who instilled into them the importance of education. The literature describes family, for the African American male, as a source of encouragement, guidance, approval, and cultural and individual affirmation while offering reassurance of potential (Jones, 2001). When asked about sustaining interest in education, 90% of the interviewees gave credit to multiple sources in their families. This finding is consistent with Harper’s (2012) study, where the participants, when asked “Did you always know you were going to college?” responded, “Yes—it was never a question of if, but where.” This study correlates with those findings; all the participants highlighted that their parents consistently conveyed what many of the participants characterized as non-negotiable expectations that they would pursue postsecondary education and were provided all the support they needed to make this a reality.

Six (75%) of the Black males interviewed credited their mother specifically and only two mentioned their father. Other family members were also mentioned as giving guidance and support. Participant 8 stated during the interview, “My mom inspired me to go to college and to do something positive with my life because my goal was to make her life easy.” Family members intentionally and unintentionally influenced these
participants’ persistence. During the interview with Participant 6, who grew up in a working-class family, he stated that college “was not an option,” it was necessary, and his family would do whatever was required of them to ensure he got to college. There would not be any valid discussion about putting off college under any circumstances; his parents made it clear that was his ticket to success.

Participant 5, who came from a low-income socioeconomic background, was given the same message. “Going into high school I knew I was going to college, it was a matter of which college I was going to and what I was going to study, but there was never an option for me not to continue my education after high school.” The evidence of parental and family involvement was clear. The participants in some cases would switch between parental and family involvement. Several phrases were used consistently to describe this relationship. “They were my backbone.” was a popular line used when speaking of their family and parental support and encouragement.

This study points to the need for more parents’ involvement in issues concerning their children and must be used to inform parents and high school and college administrators. The study shows that once parents are involved, there is a strong likelihood that students will have the support and encouragement to do better in school. School administrations at the high school and college level should strive to improve communication with parents about their children’s performance in school. There is also a need for colleges to create more programs that bring parents and family members together around issues that involve students’ achievement.

Research Question 2: Which college experiences enable Black men to compete successfully for careers in their fields? The question addressed what resources
helped Black males complete in their desired profession. It focused on the strength-based model and found two major themes that provided significant insight into how the participants in this study found success in college. Relationship with faculty and extracurricular activities involvement were identified as major themes.

*These college-educated, full-time employed, Black male mentors reported having a relationship with faculty that is significant to Black male success.*

Relationship with faculty was described by many of the participants as very important to the understanding of what is required of them. Bonner and Bailey (2006) found that the ideal arrangement for the Black male college student is to connect him with a faculty member, especially if the faculty member is of similar race. Establishing an early relationship with a faculty provided them with a “go to person” as the need arose. In this study, the participants described faculty as having the connections to ensure that students knew what was on the horizon. The faculty was the one that guided students to courses that could be helpful for their future careers.

During the study it was found that participants who had a constant dialogue with an instructor about careers and academic expectations found that they were better able to navigate the job market and had more insight into what is required in a specific career field. One participant described the relationship he had with a particular faculty as the most helpful relationship he had in college. “This guy [the faculty],” the participant said, “helped me navigate the airline industry. . . . He’d say, you know, you don’t need this class, because in reality, if you want to get here, if you want to work with this company or be in an airline industry in this field then you should take these classes.”
Other participants talked about having a faculty that understands them. The participants mentioned that when they had dialogue on a constant basis outside of class, it provided them with an opportunity to discuss life skills and other issues that might be challenging to discuss in the classroom. Seven of the eight participants spoke of relationships with faculty as initially intimidating. The same seven said that once the initial fear was over, they felt comfortable expressing their concerns to the faculty.

Two of the seven participants explained that some institutions made it easy to create a dialogue between students and faculty. “For the African American male, identifying and connecting with faculty provides him with a knowledgeable liaison, . . . assisting him with matters of academic importance” (Bonner & Bailey, 2006, p. 29). The findings in this study concurred that shared race was not as important as the relationship with faculty. It is important to note that this is considered significant and correlates with other research that found that student-faculty relationships are a strong indicator of academic success for Black males.

The findings indicated that when faculty and Black male students engage on a regular basis it helps to form relationships and contributes to better performance from Black male students in the areas of academics. This suggests that there is a need for specific programs that will allow Black male students to engage with faculty early in their college life. The earlier Black males are engaged with faculty, the more it helps them to gain academic confidence and improve their self-confidence.

These findings suggest that parents should encourage institutions to have programs that will allow Black males to be connected with faculty more often and easily. None of the seven participants had any special arrangement through college program that
facilitated this kind of engagement, further highlighting the need for these programs on college campuses.

These college-educated, employed, Black male mentors were encouraged as students to participate in extracurricular activities. Some participants in this study describe their extracurricular involvement as a purposeful enriching activity that gave them the opportunity to put theory into practice. Many of the participants in the study credit their involvement in extracurricular activities as the impetus for their view on the world. They also viewed extracurricular activities as an opportunity to be meaningfully engaged in activities that mattered to them. The participants discussed how they bonded with others during these activities and how it influenced their lived experiences on campus and helped them to stay focused on graduating.

One participant described his experience with the Police Athletic League as blessed. “I played basketball in the PAL, Police Athletic League and I came across different positive individuals and through all my life, I can honestly say I’ve been blessed.” During the interviews, the participants stressed that their involvement in student’s club organizations on or off school grounds was an important instrument in helping them to have a balance approach to success. It provided them with a balanced approach to life and helped them from an early age to learn how to manage their personal and professional life. “The year I did not play was like sophomore year, but I played the other three years and that prepared me just to be able to manage time between practice, class, and homework, and all the other stuff,” said one participant. Taking part in activities sanctioned by the college or community-based activities that provide the opportunity for meaningful engagement helped most of the participants find another way
of dealing with life issues and provided practical training that ultimately helped them in the real world.

The implications from participants who were involved in extracurricular activities continue to justify the well-documented benefits of clubs activities on college campuses. The findings showed that even though these students might have been already motivated, their involvement outside the classroom was helpful for their success.

**Research Question 3: What factors influenced Black male career choices?**

Each participant had a different experience during their first job after college based on whether or not they were exposed to the working environment during college. Five of the eight participants either had worked while in college or had experienced internship opportunities. Participants who had experience through internship or part-time jobs expressed less shock during the earlier part of their career. All the participants expressed how early exposure through part-time jobs or internships had some effect on future aspirations. One participant pointed out that not doing an internship was a mistake. “I didn’t do internships in college; I did not take advantage of them and later I saw where it hurts.” The findings illuminate a strong relationship between early work experience, internship opportunities, and current career fields.

Participants’ experiences working in different environments served as a motivating factor that helped shape their choices on what career field they should choose. One participant spoke about his experience doing an internship at financial firm. He claimed that the internship provided him with industry knowledge and gave him one leg in the door. Five of the eight participants did internships or worked while in college. Participants 5 talked about his experience in the workforce during college. “It really
exposed me to a lot of different areas of the world and different industries. So that kind of really opened my eyes to the world of possibilities for my career.” All the participants who worked or did internship in college felt it gave them the confidence and strength of character to perform well in their careers. Two of the participants felt that internship gave them a professional advantage that lead to early promotion in their careers. The study points to lack of exposure for many Black males in the area of internship in their career fields. There was a clear difference in experience between the Black males that participated in internship and those who did not. This study highlights the need for more awareness among Black males about the importance of participating in internship programs.

**Research Question 4: To what degree are Black males currently employed in their desired careers?** This question addressed Black male participant’s career choice pregraduation and career experiences. Three interlocking themes (a) culture shock, (b) career mentor, and (c) understanding work place politics were the strongly represented during the interviews. Six (75%) of the interviewees expressed some form of culture shock during their first job experience.

*These college-educated, employed, Black male mentors expressed how lack of career advice led to culture shock and encouraged young Black males to seek early career advice.* The study shows a strong misalignment between areas of studies and career fields. Several of the participants are currently employed in careers very different than their field of study. Some participants felt that the job market did not reflect their expectations coming out of college. “I came out of college thinking I would be making like $70,000 a year doing very important things,” said Participant 5. It is worth noting
that even though only one of the participants clearly mentioned salaries as a misalignment with expectations, others insinuated this misalignment in other areas, such as job duties.

**These college-educated, employed, Black male mentors stressed the importance of young Black males to seek advice on how to navigate and understand work place politics.** The reaction from the participants when asked if they had been exposed to workplace politics was astonishing. Some participants felt workplace politics never affected them, because they stayed above the internal bureaucracy, but others made it clear that it significantly affects the way they are evaluated. Participant 3 stated, “I’m being honest; people thought I was in my job because of affirmative action.” The racial undertone expressed by two of the participants spoke volumes about how they thought they were viewed in the workplace as Black males. The participants also discussed how many of their Black male counterparts are not working in their desired fields, not because of qualifications, but because of the politics. The implications from these findings further suggest that Black males are not as exposed to the complexities of the politics in workplace as their White counterparts. None of the eight Black males interviewed used racism as an excuse, but felt that in the workplace they were more scrutinized than their White colleagues by the White supervisor.

**These college-educated, employed, Black male mentors encouraged young Black males to seek career mentors.** During the interviews seven (87.5%) of the participants referred to or insinuated the importance of career mentors. They felt that individuals with career mentors were able to navigate the professional world much more quickly. The underlying findings are important to career mentorship. Some individuals
whom have had career mentors reported higher earnings because they had someone to help them navigate the company. The interviewees constantly referred to alignment of poor career choices with lack of career mentorship. All Black males interviewed for this study implied the need for career mentors. The participants felt that the lack of a career mentor was a big disadvantage. Institutions of higher learning should create programs that allow Black males the opportunity to be mentored by a professional in their desired industry.

**Limitations of Study**

The research focused on the positive attributes of Black males’ success and did not address challenging and more complex issues, such as self-efficacy. The study only interviewed eight respondents, which may lead to less generalizable data. The interviewees in the study were mentors who already have a high level of motivation to contribute to research. The researcher, being a Black male who has experienced strong academic and personal success, could be blinded by glut of research on Black males’ failure. Furthermore, the majority of the participants were from the Northeast region of the country. In this study, success is narrowly defined and doesn’t take into account the self-employed, graduates of trade schools, and other self-made successes of Black males.

**Recommendations**

The qualitative data gathered through this study leads to recommendations for parents, high school administrators, colleges, and universities, and for future studies. These college-educated, employed, Black male mentors highlighted the following points during their interviews. (a) Benefits of precollege programs and advanced placement classes, (b) the importance of students’ clubs and organizations, (c) parental and family
involvement, (d) the advantages of student and faculty relationships, (e) the knowledge gained by students’ involvement outside the classroom, (f) the lessons learned from doing internships and having a career mentor.

**Recommendation 1: provide accessible precollege programs.** Colleges and high school administrators need to provide accessible precollege programs (e.g., college credit courses) to Black males while they are still in high school and make their parents aware of these courses. Parents and family members who care about Black males’ success must expose them to precollege programs and encourage high schools to create more advanced placement classes. Precollege programs such as College Now and advanced placement classes are a good example of educational resources that will help Black males to gain an early interest in academics. The participants noted that the precollege programs and advanced classes taken during high school were an asset to their success. Institutions that are interested in improving graduation rates, retention, and academic performance must make more precollege programs available for Black males.

**Recommendation 2: Encourage Black males to participate in student clubs and organizations.** School administrators, parents, and social workers must encourage Black males to participate in student clubs and organizations. Institutions, policymakers, and local community-based organizations need to invest more resources in finding ways to connect college students with students’ clubs and organizations. Black male students should be encouraged to participate in academic clubs as a means of obtaining experiences that integrate theory and practice. Colleges and universities need to collaborate with K–12 educational institutions to design clubs and organizations that are similar to those on college campuses and introduce these clubs at the high school level.
Recommendation 3: Reinforce the importance of a college education to Black males. Parents and family members have the ultimate responsibility to consistently reinforce the importance of education to Black males. They must be involved early in the child’s education, with the message that college is the gateway for success. Parents and family members should attend all parent teacher conferences and district board meetings. They must consistently communicate with college advisors, where possible, and seek advice on issues concerning student performance on a regular basis. It was clear that those who had family involvement had more at stake, and institutions felt more obligated to serve them better.

Recommendation 4: Colleges and universities should develop programs that create venues for engagement between Black male students and faculty. Faculty have more contact time with Black male students than any other college administrators. The findings point to the need for college and universities to take full responsibility to ensure engagement between faculty and Black male students. When faculty and Black male students engage on a regular basis it helps to form relationships and to contribute to better performance from the students in the area of academics. Academic institutions need to design specific programs that will allow Black male students to be engaged with faculty early in their college life. Programs may be developed such as meet and greet, mandatory office hours between Black males and faculty, and rewards for faculty that make a genuine effort to engage Black male students outside the classroom.

Recommendation 5: Parents and family members should encourage black males’ participation in activities outside the classroom. Black males students should be encouraged to participate in student organizations, athletics clubs and community-
based organizations. These organizations provide the opportunity for meaningful engagement that helps to build character and teach social justice. College and university officials should make it easier for student club organizations to be formed. More clubs on college campuses will provide more opportunity for a sense of community and help with retention.

Recommendation 6: Colleges and universities should develop programs that create opportunities for Black males to do internships and access career mentors. During the interviews, 5 of the 8 Black male participants had either worked or taken an internship while in school. They expressed how those earlier experiences provided them with knowledge that they could not gain outside of that kind of opportunity. Academic institutions should provide mandatory internships and opportunities for Black male students. It is clear that when Black male students participate in internships they are more likely to succeed than those who were not exposed to the same opportunity.

Structured mentoring programs have been a significant tool in providing Black male students with guidance, work opportunities, and character building. Harper (2012) highlighted how instrumental mentoring is to Black males: those with mentors were more likely to persist to graduation. Parents and academic institutions should strive to connect Black male students with mentors.

Recommendation 7: Three points for future empirical studies to examine.

1. Explore how academic institutions are developing programs to improve the educational outcomes for Black males. The participants in this study felt that some institutions were better able to serve them as Black male students. The level of
commitment by academic institutions varies from committed offices and programs to nonexistent.

2. Future studies should explore how family and community environments influence Black male success. The topics of family support and community expectation were constantly discussed by the participants. These social factors had significant impact on Black males’ expectations of themselves. Understanding how family and community provide positive support for Black males warrants further investigation. The data would be a help to families, community leaders, and educational advocates to develop support programs aimed at improving educational outcomes among this group.

3. Future studies should explore the role of mentorship for Black males and its effects on Black male success. There was a clear connection between Black males’ success and mentorship during this study. Further exploration may lead to data that could be used to develop programs and identify resources that might be helpful to Black male success.

Conclusion

This study focused on understanding the lessons learned from college-educated, employed Black males who persisted through K–12 to successful employment. These Black men overcame all the challenges and negative stereotypes that are usually placed on Black males. Their success was captured through interviews in a qualitative study. The Black males in this study were selected from an impressive population of mentors that participated in an annual male empowerment seminar for Black males. Four research questions were employed to gather their lived experiences.
1. How do family members nurture and sustain Black male students’ interest in school according to college-educated, employed Black male mentors?

2. Which college experiences enable Black men to compete successfully for careers in their fields according to college-educated, employed Black male mentors?

3. What factors influenced Black male career choices according to college-educated, employed Black male mentors?

4. To what degree are Black male participants currently employed in their desired careers according to college-educated, employed Black male mentors?

The eight Black male mentors interviewed came from various academic institutions, different careers, varied socioeconomic backgrounds, varied family structures, different career fields, and different age ranges. The results of this study concur with research such as that of Bonner (2009), who calls for early identification of gifted Black males, and Cuyjet (2011), who calls for more research on what policies and programs actually help Black males succeed.

Besides concurring with Bonner and Cuyjet the results magnified the researcher’s theoretical rational adapted from Harper’s (2012) anti-deficit achievement framework. The findings validate and corroborate Harper’s (2012) findings on what led to the success of 219 Black males across the United States who participated in his study. Parental involvement in education, participating in precollege programs and advanced classes, and relationships with faculty and career mentors were four factors found in this research that concurred with Harper’s findings. The population of men studied applauded these factors as major contributors to their success. We should be mindful that the stories of these
successful Black males are not uncommon but are untold. Let us find them and tell their stories.
References


Appendix A

Harper’s Anti-Deficit Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-College Socialization</th>
<th>College Achievement</th>
<th>Post-College Success</th>
<th>Employment Post-Graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Familial Factors</strong></td>
<td><strong>Classroom Experiences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Graduate School Enrollment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Career Choice-Post Graduation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do family members nurture and sustain Black male students' interest in school?</td>
<td>What compels one to speak and participate actively in courses in which he is the only Black student?</td>
<td>What happened in college to develop and support Black male students’ interest in pursuing degrees beyond the baccalaureate?</td>
<td>Did you work while in college?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do parents help shape Black men’s college aspirations?</td>
<td>Which instructional practices best engage Black male colleagues?</td>
<td>How do Black undergraduate men who experience racism at predominately white universities maintain their commitment to pursuing graduate and professional degrees at similar types of institutions?</td>
<td>To what extent did your undergraduate experience prepare you for your first job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K-12 School Forces</strong></td>
<td><strong>Out-of-Class Engagement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Graduate School Enrollment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Career Experiences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do teachers and other school agents do to assist Black men in getting to college?</td>
<td>What compels Black men to take advantage of campus resources and engagement opportunities?</td>
<td>What developmental gains do Black male students attribute to studying abroad?</td>
<td>How do you feel about your career?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do Black male students negotiate academic achievement alongside peer acceptance?</td>
<td>What unique educational benefits and outcomes are confirmed to Black male student leaders?</td>
<td>How do Black men cultivate value-added relationships with faculty and administrators?</td>
<td>Does your career really match your expectations going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Out-of-School College Prep Resource</strong></td>
<td><strong>Enriching Educational Experiences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Career Readiness</strong></td>
<td>What did you wish you knew going before you start working?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do low-income and first generation Black male students acquire knowledge about college?</td>
<td>Which college experiences enable Black men to compete successfully for careers in their fields?</td>
<td>What prepares Black male achievers for racial politics they will encounter in post-college workplace settings?</td>
<td>Thinking back on the entire experience of earning your degree and preparing for your career, is there anything you would have done differently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which programs and experiences enhance Black men’s college readiness?</td>
<td>What do Black male students find appealing about doing research with professors?</td>
<td>How do faculty and other institutional agents enhance Black men’s career development and readiness?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PEERS  RESIDENCE  FACULTY
Appendix B

Request for Permission to Use the Anti-Deficit Framework

Wright, Cecil <cdw02642@sjfc.edu>

to sharper1, Cecil

Hello Dr. Harper,

My name is Cecil Wright, I am a doctoral student at St. John Fisher College. I am completing my dissertation proposal on Lessons Learned from College Educated Employed Black males. My population of interest is 52 Black males that participated in an annual male empowerment event over a four-year period that influenced over 1000 mentees.

During my literature review, I came across one of your study dated January 2012, Black Male Student Success in Higher Education: A Report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study. I am requesting your permission to use the Anti-deficit Achievement Framework as theoretical framework to investigate the lived experiences among this population. I understand, I would have to design my own questions under each pipelines but I would really appreciate using your framework as the foundation for my study.
Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Cecil Wright
Appendix C

Permission to Use the Anti-Deficit Framework

St. John Fisher College

cdw02642@students.sjfc.edu

SHAUN R HARPER <sharper1@upenn.edu> 9:37 AM (6 hours ago)

to me

Dear Cecil,

You have my permission to use the Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework as long as you cite Harper (2012) as the original source. Best wishes with your dissertation. Please send me an electronic copy of the final version post-defense. Meanwhile, take good care and happy writing!

My best,
Shaun

Shaun R. Harper, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Director
Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education
University of Pennsylvania
3700 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Phone: (215) 898-5147
Faculty Website: http://works.bepress.com/sharper
Center Website: https://www.gse.upenn.edu/equity

Associate Editor, Educational Researcher
Journal Website: http://edr.sagepub.com
Appendix D

Institutions Participating in Male Empowerment Seminars

Comprehensive State University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Participants Attended</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Type of Institutions</th>
<th>Number of times Participated</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>John Jay College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hofstra University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Connecticut State University</td>
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## Liberal Arts College

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<td>Mercy College</td>
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## Private for Profit

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## Historical Black Colleges/ University

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<th>Number of Times Participated</th>
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<td>Private Historically Black College</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark Atlanta University</td>
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<td>Private Historically Black College</td>
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## Private Not-For Profit

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<td>Private Not-for-Profit</td>
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### Public

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<td>Lincoln University</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Carolina Agricultural &amp; Technical State University</td>
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Appendix E

E-mail to Mentors for Male Empowerment Event

Hello All,

As you know, the growing number of African American and Latino males who drop out of high school and do not attend college is staggering. None of us are comfortable with this alarming dropout rate and all across the country there has been a call to raise awareness of this serious issue. To that end, Monroe College is hosting their Third Annual Male Empowerment seminar for male students. This seminar will provide stellar examples of successful males whom have made significant accomplishments in their respective fields.

This letter is the “Save the date” for our Third Annual “Male Empowerment Event”. The theme of this event is “Empowerment begins with M.E.” This event will be held on Thursday, April 19th from 9:00am-12:00pm at our Bronx campus, located at 2501 Jerome Avenue, Bronx, NY 10468.

I know greatness travels in groups so as a potential mentor I urge you to spread the word about this great event throughout your networks. We are looking to make this year’s event bigger and better than before and we will need your help to do so. Our goal is to make this a once in a lifetime opportunity to meet and listen to stellar examples of success from minority men.

We are expecting over 450 male students, and would like to increase the amount of mentors for this year. If possible, please send us a brief bio (If there is no information to be updated, I can use the same one from last year) and picture should you be interested in being a part of this great event.

These can be sent to, Jessica Sanders, at jsanders@monroecollege.edu, to confirm your participation. All pictures and brief bios must be submitted by March 12th, 2012.

Best regards,

Cecil Wright, MBA
Director of Undergraduate Admissions
Monroe College
2501 Jerome Avenue
The Bronx, New York 10468
Phone: 718 933-6700
Fax: 718 364-3552
cwright@monroecollege.edu
Appendix F

Correspondence to Study Participants

Dear ________________,

Let me thank you again for your participation in Monroe College’s Male Empowerment Seminar and for your contribution in making this annual event a success. I am completing a doctorate (Ed.D.) at St. John Fisher College and my dissertation research is focused on a qualitative study on lessons learned from educated, employed Black male who participated in Monroe College’s Male Empowerment Event.

The purpose for the contact is to request your participation in this study. This study hopes to gain insight about Black males’ success. As a participant in this study, you will be asked to share your experiences relative to obtaining your undergraduate degree.

Participants in this study must meet the following criteria and be willing to participate in an individual 60-minute interview (In person preferred but phone interview also possible):

1. Black male
2. Presently employed
3. Obtained a bachelor’s degree in the United States
4. Participated in the Monroe College Male Empowerment Seminar

The information obtained in this study will be used to create a road map for the success of young Black males. I would be very grateful if you could participate.

Sincerely,

Cecil Wright, Doctoral Candidate

St. John Fisher College - Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education
Appendix G

Participant Eligibility Profile

1. First Name: __________________ Last Name________________________________

2. Home Address_____________________________________________________________
   City__________________________ ________________ State_________
   Zip___________

3. E-mail address____________________________________________________________

4. Phone 1 (_______) ________-_________ Phone 2 (_______) __________-________

5. Date of birth Month______________ Day__________
   Year_______________________

6. Where were you born? City ____________________________State_____________

7. Where did you grow up? City ____________________________State_____________

8. Where did you attend high school? _________________________________________

9. Current employment position: _____________________________________________
   Employer: _______________________________________________________________

10. What is your mother’s highest level of education?
    
    [ ] Some high school          [ ] Bachelor’s degree
    [ ] Associate’s degree or some college    [ ] Master’s degree
    [ ] Doctorate or Terminal Professional degree   [ ] Don’t know

11. What is your father’s highest level of education?
☐ Some high school ☐ Bachelor’s degree
☐ Associate’s degree or some college ☐ Master’s degree
☐ Doctorate or Terminal Professional degree ☐ Don’t know

12. Educational Institutions Attended/Degrees Earned (include undergraduate and graduate)

13. How do you describe your family structure while growing up?
   ☐ Single Parent ☐ Two parent ☐ Other

14. How do you describe the family socioeconomic while growing?
   ☐ Low income ☐ Working Class
   ☐ Middle Class ☐ Affluent

**Institution 1**

Name of Institution_____________________________________________________________

City_______________________________________________State________________

Number of credits earned_________ Degree Awarded_________________________________

Date degree was awarded:

Month________________Year______________________________

Major/Minor_______________________________________________________________

Did you attend: ☐ Part-time ☐ Full-time?

Did you: ☐ Commute or ☐ Reside on campus?

Were you involved student clubs or other forms of involvement: ☐ Yes ☐ No
Appendix H

Interview Schedule

1. Confirm appointment three days in advance  ☐ Yes  ☐ No
2. If no reschedule appointment
3. Confirm the time and location
4. Arrive 30 minutes before interview
5. Set up recording instrument
6. Test equipment; change battery if necessary
7. Thank interviewee for the opportunity before the interviewee
8. Explain the time commitment
9. Begin interview
10. Follow questions stated on the interview questions
11. Thank interviewee again at the end.
Appendix I

Consent Form

DESCRIPTION

You are invited to participate in a research study that will result in a dissertation for the completion of a Doctor of Education degree (Ed.D.) in Executive Leadership at St. John Fisher College. I am seeking to understand lessons learned from educated, employed Black males who participated in Monroe College Male Empowerment event. You will be asked to answer questions during an individual interview that would last approximately 1 hour. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. In addition to providing the interview, you would be asked to provide a completed Participant Eligibility Profile. Your completed Participant Eligibility Profile, audio file, interview transcripts, and resume will be kept by me in a secure location.

The interview will take place in my office at 2501 Jerome Ave, Bronx, New York, or at a location that is more convenient for you. In-person interviews are preferred, but if that is not possible, a phone interview may be scheduled.

QUESTIONS

Questions about the study may be addressed to:

Cecil Wright at 2501 Jerome Ave, Bronx, New York 10468

Phone: (914) 879-1836–6429

E-mail: cdw02642@sjfc.edu
RISKS AND BENEFITS

There are no anticipated risks associated with this study. As a participant in this study, you may request to receive a copy of the summary of findings upon completion of the dissertation. Upon your consent, the interview will be audio recorded. The audio recordings will be transcribed by me or a transcriptionist. No other parties will have access to the audio files. Upon completion of the dissertation in 2012, the audio files will be kept in a safe location for 5 years.

In the written dissertation, your actual first name will be used. The undergraduate institution you attended will be described, not by name, but by its type, size and location. Your place of business will be described, not by its name, but by its type, size and location.

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in the interview will require approximately 1 hour of your time, plus travel to the interview location. Follow-up interviews by phone or e-mail will be conducted as needed.

PAYMENTS

Although your assistance is greatly appreciated, there will be no payment for your participation. However, travel expenses will be reimbursed.

YOUR RIGHTS

If you have read this form and decided to participate in this study, please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer
particular questions. Your first name and descriptions of the educational institutions and places of employment will be included in the written publication. If you withdraw from the study, all audio recordings, transcripts, and other documents will be destroyed. Your willingness or unwillingness to participate in this research will have no bearing on any affiliation you may have with Monroe College, where I serve as Director of Admissions.

**CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS**

If you have questions, concerns or complaints regarding your participation in this research study please contact Cecil Wright at 914-879-1836.

I give consent to be audio recorded during this study; please initial: __ Yes __ No

The extra copy of this consent form is for you to keep.

SIGNATURE ______________________________________________________ DATE

Printed Name ______________________________________________________
Appendix J

Interview Protocols

Opening: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview for my dissertation study. During the interview, I’ll ask you to recall your college experience and to describe how that experience prepared you to complete your degree and transition into your career. I hope to come to some understanding of what factors had the most impact your early experience in life, was there any significant person or incident that pushed you towards completion of your degree. How did you planned and prepared for your potential career after your undergraduate degrees an undergraduate. What opportunities or experiences influenced your transition from your undergraduate studies to your career. Do you mind if I record our interview?

Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework

Precollege Socialization and Readiness

1. How did your family members nurture and sustain your interest in school?

2. How did your parents help shape your college aspirations

   Follow-up: Did you always know you were going to college?

   Follow-up: [If he says yes] How did you know you were going?

   Follow-up: [If he says no] How did you come up with your decision to go college.

   Follow-up: Who was involved in helping you decide where to go?

   Follow-up: What important choices or trade-offs did you have to make to attend college?
3. Did teachers and other school administrators do to assist you in getting to college?

4. How did you negotiate academic achievement alongside peer acceptance?

5. How did you acquire knowledge about college?

6. Which programs and experiences enhance your college readiness?

**College Achievement**

1. Were you apart of any classes where you were one of few Black students?

   Follow-up: [If he says yes] How did that impact your class participation?

2. Were there any courses for which you felt academically underprepared?

   Follow-up: [If he says yes] How were you able overcome those challenges?

3. Did you take advantage of campus resources and engagement opportunities?

   Follow-up: [If he says yes] What campus resources and engagement opportunities were you apart of?

   Follow-up: Was this involvement beneficial to you?

   Follow-up: [If he says no] Why Not?

4. How do you foster mutually supportive relationships with your lower-performing same-race male peers?

5. Which institutional practices best engage you while in college?
6. Did you encounter any stereotypes in the classroom?

   Follow-up: [If he says yes] How did you respond

7. Did you participate in any study abroad programs?

   Follow-up: [If he says yes] How was that experience?

   Follow-up: [If he says no] Why not?

8. Did you cultivate beneficial relationships with faculty and administrators?

9. Did work you closely with any of your professors?

   Follow-up: [If he says yes] How was that experience?

   Follow-up: [If he says no] Why not?

PreCollege Success

1. Was there something in college that helped your interest in pursuing degrees beyond the baccalaureate?

2. Did you experience racism at your universities or college?

   Follow-up: [If he says yes] How was that experience?

   Follow-up: [If he says no] Why not?

3. Which college experiences enable you to compete successfully for careers in their fields?
4. What prepared you for the racial politics they will encounter in precollege workplace settings?

5. How did faculty and other institutional agents enhance your career development and readiness?

**Employment Post Graduation**

1. Did you work while in college?

   Follow-up: [If he says yes] How did that experience help to prepare you for your current career?

   Follow-up: [If he says no] Why not?

2. To what extent did your undergraduate experience prepare you for your first job?

3. Were your career goals influenced by your early work experience?

4. How you feel about your career?

5. Does your career reality match your expectations going?

6. What did you wish you knew going before you start working?

Closing: Thank you again for spending this time with me today. I hope you enjoyed speaking about your own journey.