BLACK MALES IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all individuals regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and relationships who are genuinely interested in the plight and well-being of Black males.   Also, this work is dedicated to the participants of the study. These four young men are persevering through life, have the most positive attitudes toward their abilities to succeed and have always exhibited respect toward others. They are ideal Black male role models.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study will explore six forms of cultural capital that Students of Color bring with them to the classroom from their homes and communities (Yosso, 2005). Using Critical Race Theory, Yosso introduces an anti-deficit approach, an alternative to the traditional Bourdieuean cultural capital theory, to bring attention to an array of cultural knowledge, skills, experiences, abilities and social networks that people of color and marginalized groups utilize to aid in their success in higher education. These cultural wealth capitals are often unrecognized or acknowledged.

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Since the 1980s, the percentage of Black males entering college has decreased both continuously and at a rate higher than that of other ethnicities and genders (College Board, 2011; NCES, 2007; Strayhorn, 2007). Not only has Black male enrollment declined at a greater rate than other ethnicities, it has also exceeded that of Black females. In 1976, Black males made up 4.3% of the student population enrolled in institutions of higher education. Twenty-six years later, the percentage remained the same (Harper, 2006; Strayhorn, 2010).

Harper (2012b) conducted one of the largest studies to date on Black male student success in higher education. He interviewed 219 Black male undergraduates from 42 different universities and colleges across 20 states. When asked, "What the most surprising finding in the study was," he responded:

> Most surprising and most disappointing is 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, what compelled him to be engaged in student organizations and college classrooms, and what he learned that could help improve achievement and engagement among Black male collegians. (p.17)

If such questions are not being asked of the participants who are successfully navigating college, how do we know what works and does not work with this population of students?

When I became a doctoral student in 2006 I knew a dissertation was required as the final step in the process. From the beginning my intended dissertation topic never

deviated from addressing Black males and education. The topic is important to me because I would like to see an increase in the matriculation rates of Black males.

Rationale for the Study

Education is viewed as bringing both individual and societal benefits. Murnane and Willett (2011) asserted that education is viewed as a mechanism for enhancing economic opportunities and social mobility, preparing youth for civic engagements, and developing a skilled workforce to promote quality of life for many people. Educated Black males are more likely to contribute to society as well as enhance the quality of life for themselves and their communities (Baum, Ma & Payea, 2010; Hardy, Hazeen, & Harrison, 2013). However, I know from experience and others have documented that there are assets in communities of color that can have a positive impact on the development of Black males including their aspirations to attain a college education. (Coleman, 1997; Strayhorn, 2009).

Purpose of Study

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to use an assets based view of cultural wealth in communities of color to explore how that wealth contributed to Black males' development and their journey to higher education. Given the national decline in Black males attending college (College Board, 2011; NCES, 2007; Strayhorn, 2007) and recognizing the potential benefits of a college education, it was important to explore the assets used by Black males who successfully matriculated higher education.

This study identifies how cultural capital (Yosso, 2005) in communities of color impacted the decisions of the Black males to matriculate at an institution of higher education in the southwest of the U.S. This study builds on Harper's (2012b) surprise

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finding that Black males indicated no one had ever sat down and asked how they navigated higher education. This study uses the stories of Black males to describe their educational journey.

Significance of Study

This study disrupts the traditional narrative (Bell, 1995; Harper & Associates, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Urrieta & Villenas, 2013) of the Black males' challenges in matriculating, persisting, and graduating from higher education, in the hopes of identifying the value and wealth these students bring. Thus, their stories contribute not only to this research, but also to society at-large.

Educators and policymakers indicate that increasing matriculation and graduation rates for Black males is not only a matter of equity but also has major implications for the United States in a competitive global economy (Palmer, Moore, Davis & Hilton, 2010). As ethnic minority population growth outpaces non-minorities, scholars have suggested that Black males are in the worst shape of all, viewed from the perspective of educational attainment (Palmer, Moore, Davis & Hilton, 2010). We are losing generations of Black males who have much to offer society and we will continue to lose them if we do not pay more attention to their educational issues.

Members of the Black male community at the institution in which this study was conducted have a wealth of knowledge to contribute to their campus community as well as the communities where they grew up, yet their wealth has not been tapped as a source for change. Higher education can provide a public good and Black students' participation can accrue benefits for society at large (Baum, Ma & Payea, 2010; Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998). The continued and systemic exclusion of Black males in

institutions of higher education will impact the university and community at large in a negative way.

This research can contribute to the change process by focusing on Black males who are successfully accessing higher education. Further, it is necessary to provide optimal options for Black males, key agents, and communities of color. This research can also inform the social, cultural, economic, and political fabric of the larger community including the benefits which accrue to an educated society.

The significance of this information is that it can be used to inform educators, policy-makers, community leaders, and parents, as well as other Black males, about cultural wealth present in their homes and communities that can be used to increase the percentages of Black males matriculating higher education. There are cultural capitals many people of color are exposed to in their communities, and which they bring with them to school, to aid in the pursuit of a college education.

Research Question

Using Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth theory, this qualitative research uses the spoken histories of four undergraduate students who are participants in the institution's African American Dialogue Series (AAMDS) and identify as either Black or African American to share how they successfully matriculated into higher education. The research question that guided this study was "What forms of cultural capital contribute to the participants' development and matriculation at this institution?"

Yosso (2005) challenged Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) theory that the knowledges of the dominant groups, the upper and middle classes, determine which capitals are viewed as valuable. Those not born into upper and middle class families are

thus considered culturally deficient, but can access to those knowledges through formal schooling. Yosso (1997) argued that this line of thinking assumes that communities of color lack the social and cultural capital needed for upward mobility.

Conceptual Framework

Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) is the conceptual framework for the study and is based on family, social, aspirational, resistance, linguistics and navigational capitals identified by Yosso (2005) which are present in communities from which the participants come.

Familial capital is the cultural knowledge attained as a result of family nurturing which helps develop a sense of community, provides coping skills, and expands kinship to include friends and community resources, as well as blood kin. Social capital is the ability to effectively utilize networks of people and community resources in an effort to emotionally maneuver through society's institutions. Aspirational capital involves maintaining hope and holding on to dreams in the face of real or perceived barriers. Resistant capital involves exercising cultural knowledge to recognize and attack racism and oppressive behaviors. Linguistic capital pertains to intellectual and social skills gained through knowing more than one language, or the ability to use multiple styles of communication, as a result of experiences in one's community. Last, navigational capital is the ability to work and maneuver through social institutions which were not established with people of color in mind.

This study specifically sought to identify each of these forms of cultural capital as the men in the study described them contributing to their educational success.

Research Site

There is a plethora of dismal information, reports, and statistics in the literature on Black males matriculating into higher education (Cross & Slater, 2000; Jackson & Moore, 2006, 2008). The good news is there *are* Black males graduating high school and matriculating into higher education. According to statistical information from the research institution's Office of Institutional Research, the enrollment for the institution where this study was conducted has increased by fifty-six percent from 2002 through 2015. During the same time period, annual Black male matriculation percentages have increased 11 out of the past 13 years.

Table 1

Annual Matriculation Rates for Black Males

Academic Year	Change in Matriculation Rate
2002-2003	+11%
2003-2004	+4%
2004-2005	-1%
2005-2006	-3%
2006-2007	+6%
2007-2008	+5%
2008-2009	+9%
2009-2010	+10%
2010-2011	+16%
2011-2012	+3%
2012-2013	+3%
2013-2014	+13%

Note. Data provided by the research institution.

Design

This qualitative study was conducted at a large public university in the southwest United States. At the time of the study, the institution, designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HIS), was a predominately White institution with a student population over

36,000. One of the requirements to be designated as a HSI is that a minimum of 25% of the student population has to be Hispanic. The African American population was 5.9%.

Epistemological Perspective

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the epistemological perspective used to challenge Bourdieu's (1977) ideology that the dominant group determines which capitals are valuable. CRT is a theory born out of critical legal studies and asserts that racism is normal in American society. Legal scholars, led by Derek Bell (Ladson-Billings, 1998) were frustrated with the slow pace of racial reform in the United States. CRT was used to expose deficit informed research which has ignored or silenced epistemologies of people of color (Bernal Delgado, 1998; Espino, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Yosso, 2005).

Participants

The participants were all males who identified as Black or African American and who participated in the University's African American Male Dialogue Series (AAMDS). There was a concern about the matriculation, retention, and health of Black males by members of the university's Coalition of Black Faculty & Staff (CBFS) and in 2007 the AAMDS was created out of that concern.

Data Collection & Management

Data from this study were collected from participants through narrative inquiry, a qualitative methodology which elicits rich, in-depth conversations and story-telling from the perspectives of the participants. CRT draws on this approach, deviating from much mainstream scholarship by recognizing and validating storytelling as a legitimate source of information (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

I conducted two individual interviews with each participant, asking open ended, semi-structured questions. The interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed in preparation for analysis. I took notes during the interviews and recorded them in one bound notebook along with other handwritten information pertaining to the study. The notes, as well as audio recorder, were stored in a locked cabinet drawer in my office and accessed later to submit for transcribing and analysis.

Analysis

The analysis process used for this study was to take data obtained from the interviews and coded them according to Yosso's community cultural wealth capitals. I then identified common themes within the data that had been coded according to each of the forms of capital. Data analysis is further explained in chapter 3.

Trustworthiness

In an effort to ensure fair and balanced reporting (Patton, 2002), I used Lincoln and Guba's four criteria for increasing trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (2013). I established credibility by discussing with the participants my interpretations of their information after the second interview was completed. I established transferability by showing that the findings experienced in their communities transferred to a community at University of the Southwest, specifically the African American Male Dialogue Series. Finally, I established confirmability by recording participants 'verbatim comments when interpreting findings. This study was approved by the University of the Southwest Institutional Review Board. I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative on April 27, 2009 and received certification (Appendix A).

Limitations

The only limitation for the study is that all of the participants knew the researcher through participating in the African American Male Dialogue Series where I have served as a researcher since its inception in 2008. This limited the study in that as the researcher I had to make a conscious effort not to assume interpretations of the participants' responses because of my familiarity with them. However, this was also a strength because the participants know and trust me and allowed them to be more open about their personal experiences.

African American Male Dialogue Series

Around 2006-2007 there were discussions amongst Black male members of the University's Coalition of Black Faculty and Staff (CBFS) out of concern about the state of affairs of Black males on campus. The sense of community and support amongst this community did not appear to be as strong as in previous years. Also, student members had individual conversations with CBFS representatives about the same concern. There was knowledge that across the nation the matriculation and graduation rates for Black males lagged all others, although the rates at this institution had remained steady. During 2007, the male members of the CBFS decided to identify a small group of Black men, known to be influential in the Black community on campus, and have a frank discussion about the state of affairs of Black students, males in particular. The discussion led to the creation of the African American Male Dialogue Series (AAMDS) in 2008.

We charged each individual in that first group of men to identify one male whom they considered to have the ability to positively influence other Black males on campus. Out of respect for the students' assertion that Black males who are officers in

organizations are not necessarily influential, we confirmed that the intent was not to identify organizational leaders, although they were not excluded, but rather to identify Black males who were respected, and who could exert positive influence on the community.

In 2008, the AAMDS began on the campus of the University of the Southwest. Since that time, I participated as a facilitator. At the time of the study, the series had been instrumental in supporting a community where selected Black male students got together with Black male faculty and staff members to discuss topics of concern to the students. Although the topics and discussions were initiated by the students, as facilitators we always made sure there was an academic component included in the two hour sessions.

The only expectation was that the ideas, topics, and solutions discussed in the series were carried back out into the community and shared with other Black males. Student members of the dialogue series assumed the role of facilitator during the discussions with their peers. "My Brotha's Keeper" was the mantra adopted by the first set of students to concisely identify the ultimate purpose of the series.

The conversations included celebrations, current and historical events, sports, dating, or whatever the participants considered to be of importance to them, but all were had in a spirit of increasing the retention and graduation rates of Black males. Along with faculty and staff colleagues, we consistently and intentionally integrated the importance of completing their education and becoming their brother's keeper, especially for those who were not participants in the series. In the eight years since its inception and at the time of writing, over 95% of the participants have graduated or have been retained and

are on the path to graduation. This overview is provided because the AAMDS has been mentioned through this study.

My Journey

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,

Black as the pit from pole to pole,

I thank whatever gods may be

For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance

I have not winced nor cried aloud.

Under the bludgeonings of chance

My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears

Looms but the horror of the shade,

And yet the menace of the years

Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,

How charged with punishments the scroll,

I am the master of my fate,

I am the captain of my soul.

~ William Ernest Henley

Invictus is a poem which resonates with the essence of me as a Black man. Understanding the experiences and articulating the complexities of being a Black male in America is a difficult task, especially when the conversation is with people of other races. One of my most memorable experiences in my doctoral journey was the night our class somehow became engaged in a topic on Black culture. My fellow cohort members indicated there were a lot of things they were curious about or did not know about Black culture, but they were hesitant to ask out of fear that their curiosity would come across as insensitive or even racist. However, they had grown comfortable with me and wanted to know more.

Our professor must have sensed some importance of the conversation. She announced we would suspend the rest of the night's planned curriculum and talk about Black culture. I made sure to preface the conversations with "I am not qualified to talk on behalf of all Blacks, but I would definitely share some perspectives and my opinions." The bewildered looks on my cohort members' faces, the expressions of "That doesn't make sense" and similar reactions are vivid in my mind. Not everything revolved around Black males. We discussed cultural topics, which seemed trivial to my classmates, like dark skin complexion versus light skin complexion, good hair versus bad hair, and Black on Black crime.

The part of the discussion which I think exhibits a complexity difficult to explain from a Black male's perspective was when I asked the class to finish this sentence, "The backbone of the Black family is _____?" There was an almost jovial unified response, "The Black Woman." I saw a sense of pride in the eyes of the responders because they all had the same answer. My response was, "Well in American society and many parts of

the world where men are looked upon as primary leaders, protectors, providers, and heads of the household, how do you think that makes me and other Black males feel?" There was an uncomfortable silence.

I am 51 years old and have been married for 17 years. My wife and I have two beautiful children, a 15 year old daughter and a 14 year old son. I grew up in an all-Black, low socio-economic neighborhood in south Fort Worth. I have always considered myself fortunate because I lived comfortably in a four bedroom house with my mother and grandmother, and I rarely lacked for anything. Many of my friends did not have much at all and depended on welfare benefits to survive.

My mother was college educated and taught school for the first few years of my life. She later settled into menial hourly wage labor before dying of cancer in 1989 at only 54 years of age. My grandmother was the foundation of our family. She was a home-keeper. More than any other person, she was the biggest influence in my life. As a Christian, she impressed upon me the importance of living right. The most important thing she stressed to me was to be honest, respectful, brave, and to live right according to God's word. She told me that God sees my every move, and although I might be able to fool her, my aunt, or my mother, God knows my heart, and I could not fool Him, so don't play with Him. My grandmother died of natural causes three months before her 100th birthday in 1999.

My father has lived in Houston my entire life. We did not develop a real relationship until I was 13 years old. He had re-married (stepmom now deceased), and we are pretty close today. He is a retired firefighter and commercial decorator. He attended two years of college, but did not graduate and served two years in the U.S. Army.

My mom's older sister is a significant influence in my life. Growing up, I spent most of my weekends at her house where she lived with my uncle and two first cousins. Their son and daughter are six and five years older than me, respectively. They lived in a middle class neighborhood, which was predominately Black, although it did have a mix of races. Undertaking this study, I reflected on the two different communities of color where I spent my youth, and many of the capitals Yosso (2005) spoke of came to mind.

In my grandmother's neighborhood, we spent the days playing sports, cards, and dominoes, drinking alcohol, and experimenting with recreational drugs, but we hardly ever talked about school or college. In my aunt's neighborhood, we played sports, rode mini bikes, played putt-putt, went roller skating, shopped at the mall, and spent nights talking about what we wanted to be when we grew up, and where we were going to college. I liked, respected, and learned a lot in both communities, but my preference was to live a life more similar to the one I experienced in my aunt's community rather than my own. I always believed education was my way out of the south side of Fort Worth.

Looking at the two environments, there were differences I noticed then and will never forget, like window air conditioning units compared to central heat and air; garbage disposals in the kitchen versus rodent attracting garbage bags on the back porch; manicured lawns with grass versus dirt for lawns used as parking lots for broken down automobiles; and large grocery stores stocked with fresh meat, seafood, and produce versus corner grocers with limited selections of groceries at inflated prices.

It was a foregone conclusion that I was going to attend college. Everyone in my family stressed that I was going, and I had committed to myself that I would go. I always did well in school academically. I was involved at all levels, from being a street crossing

guard to performing the lead parts in plays during K-4 years; narrating an entire play in Spanish during my 5th grade year (which was the first year of busing in Fort Worth) although I had never spoken Spanish; and winning the Fort Worth Optimist Clubs' Most Scholarship, Athletic and Sportsmanship Award for my high school as senior.

In my high school, which was 99% Black, there were approximately 340 students in my graduating class. About 30 of us were identified as honor students. Our senior year we were tracked together in core courses which included math, science, and English. As I reflect back on the efforts which were obviously taking place for those 30 students, not once during my four year high school tenure did anyone other than my varsity basketball coach, who also served as our Honors English teacher, ever talk to us about college. Not once!

However, in my neighborhood many of my friends, even those much older, just knew I would go to college. One of our neighbors, Mr. Johnson lived on the corner of our street. He and his family always had a well-manicured lawn, nice cars, and they seemed to be strict on their kids because they hardly came outside much. His son was six years older than me and his daughter five years older, the same ages as my first cousins.

He was a pastor, had a well-paying job at General Motors, and was involved in local politics. When I was a child, he would pay me to go and put election signs in people's yards. As we rode through the neighborhoods, he would talk to me about politics. I had to know and understand the issues which these politicians stood for, explain their platforms, and be polite enough that people would agree to allow us to put the signs in their yards. Those trips have impacted my interests in politics today and provided a foundation for understanding the power and influence found in the political

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arena. Many people have suggested that I run for political office, and I still entertain the thought. Maybe, one day.

Mr. Johnson would also talk to me about college and the importance of a college education. He died in 2013, and one thing I never knew about him was whether or not he went to college. He impressed on me the importance of getting a college education. To be able to help myself, my family, and others, I needed that education. I will never forget Mr. Johnson.

Because I finished in the top 10% (number 14 of 340) of my high school class, I was almost guaranteed entry into most state universities. It was during a visit to North Texas State University for a high school math competition that I made up my mind that I would attend that school. I had been on the campus of only one other university, and that was Texas Christian University. Texas Christian University is where I received the Fort Worth Optimist Club's award mentioned earlier.

To show how underprepared I was to choose a college, my decision to attend North Texas State was based solely on the large number of attractive females I saw walking through the campus. I told one of my best friends, "Man I'm coming here, look at all of these fine women." His response was, "Me too." We both matriculated after finishing high school. My friend left after his second year. It took me seven and a half years to graduate, and indeed, one of the primary reasons it took so long was that I was trying to enjoy as many females as possible. But I did graduate.

Although I was probably not adequately prepared to choose a college, my family's aspirations, the time committed to me by community members like Mr. Johnson, and the peers I had as friends in my aunt's neighborhood were enough to impact my

desire to succeed and do well. From my personal experiences and hearing the stories of other Black males, Yosso's (2005) discussion of cultural wealth in communities of color was a natural connection. People in my community believed in me and protected me. Peers who had no desire to go to college always told me I was made for college. Today, after working as an educator and having discussions with hundreds of Black males since I matriculated over 34 years ago, I hear very similar stories and experiences from Black males who have matriculated and successfully navigated higher education. I make sure to talk to Black males about the importance of not only completing their education, but going back into their communities to enrich what is there and fill in the gaps for what may not be there. We have something to contribute to the wealth of our communities.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provides the foundation of the study with an overview of its rationale and design. Critical Race Theory was the epistemological perspective used to gather data through interviews using a narrative inquiry approach. Toward the end of the chapter is an in-depth and detailed introspective reflection of my experiences as they relate to my role as researcher in this study. This is significant for its contribution to understanding the wealth that may contribute to Black men's matriculation into higher education.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature researched that has informed this qualitative study. It is divided into four sections: (a) Black culture, primarily related to the cultural wealth capitals identified by Yosso (2005), which provides the conceptual framework for the study; (b) the condition of Black males in higher education; (c) an assets based approach to building hope; and (d) a review of Critical Race Theory, the epistemological approach to the study.

For over a decade Harper (2012b) has argued that much is to be learned about Black male academic success from Black males who have themselves been academically successful. Yet many of those who have been successful are not engaged in the conversations and literature. Substantially more of the literature focused on the barriers or challenges that Black males have faced in their pursuit of education than focused on Black males who were successful in their pursuits of education (Lee & Ransom, 2011; Orfield, Losen, Wald & Swanson, 2004; Toldson, 2008). Even less literature existed where the voices and stories of Black males were sources of data. Critical Race Theory points out that this is a serious omission if we are to understand the Black experience (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lynn, Jennings & Hughes, 2013; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Stanley, 2007; Taylor, 1998).

Black Culture: Cultural Wealth in Communities of Color

Culture represents the lens through which individuals view and evaluate the behaviors of others as well as allows individuals to maintain a sense of identity and impacts how they perceive themselves (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson & Bridgest, 2003).

Bourdieu described cultural capital as knowledge, skills, and behaviors learned by a person, especially from their family, within their socio-cultural context (Claussen & Osborne, 2013). He argued that in a hierarchal society the upper and middle classes determine which capital is valuable (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). His view assumes that people in communities of color do not have the social and cultural capital valued by the dominant group so they are viewed as culturally deficient. The White middle class would be considered as the standards setter according to Bourdieu's theory.

Yosso used a Critical Race Theory lens to address positive social and cultural capital present in communities of color (2005). She challenged Bourdieu's traditional interpretation of cultural capital and introduced community cultural wealth as an alternative. Using an assets-based concept, which recognizes cultural wealth found in communities of color, family, social, linguistic, aspirational, resistant, and navigational attributes comprise cultural capitals which contribute to the cultural wealth of these communities (Yosso, 2005) (Figure 1).
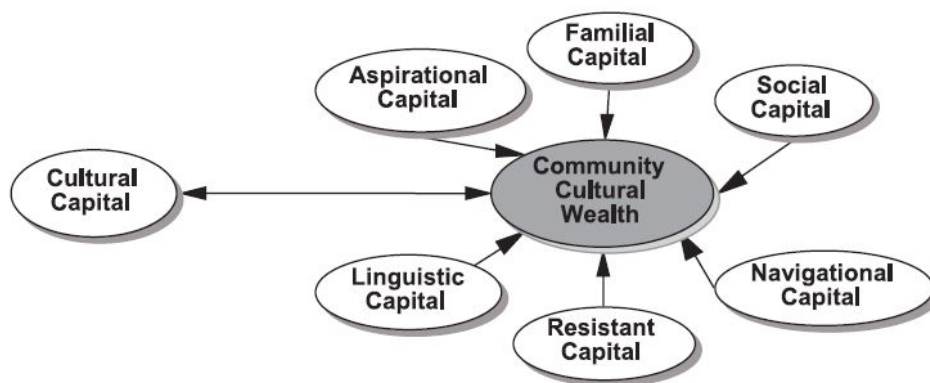
Figure 1 Community Cultural Wealth.

Students of color are able to successfully navigate institutions of higher learning by bringing these assets based capitals from their homes and communities with them into their classrooms. Non-dominant cultural capital reflects the lower status groups and embodies a set of tastes, schemes, appreciations, and understandings that include a preference for particular linguistic, musical and interactional styles (Dixon-Romain, 2013). The participants in the non-dominant cultures use these resources to gain an authentic acceptance, status, or position within their respective communities. Students of color may find themselves in settings where there is not a high value placed on the non-dominant capitals found within their culture. Nonetheless, many have been able to successfully navigate these settings without compromising their own valued capitals and culture.

The literature reviewed for culture was narrowly focused on Yosso's (2005) six forms of cultural capitals. *Familial capital* utilizes the cultural knowledge gained through kinship of immediate and extended family members as well as the community. *Social capital* involves community resources and networks of people who can provide emotional support. The community is made up of family members, as well as members of the community, who often are viewed as extended family members and provide nurturing for students. *Aspirational capital* involves the resiliency to hold on to hope in the face of real and perceived barriers, many times without the objective means to fulfill goals. *Resistant capital* uses knowledge and skills gained through challenging inequality and oppositional behaviors. *Navigational capital* utilizes skills to navigate and maneuver through institutions, and is especially helpful when navigating institutions established without people of color in mind. And, *Linguistic capital* involves social and intellectual

skills gained through communicating in multiple languages or styles and enhances the ability to communicate with a variety of audiences.

Not all forms of cultural capital may be utilized by, or even determined to be significant for, every person of color, but the capitals themselves are important assets which can be learned by, and developed in, communities of color. I cannot recall the exact textbook, but I remember reading a statement about culture that summed the meaning up for me. It was a statement by the philosopher John Dewey, and went something like, *culture has us before we have it*. This observation is important because regardless of the culture one becomes familiar with, or part of, the culture is already established before it is comprehended.

An infant or child has virtually no control over dynamics which can substantially impact their learning, beliefs, and actions as a result of the culture in which they are born and raised. Factors such as who their parents or guardians are, the neighborhood they grow up in, their parents'/guardians' socio-economic or educational status, the social institutions they are a part of, or not a part of, impact the culture they are in before they have any real opportunities to evaluate their culture or their position in life. The parents' or guardians' positions and decisions dictate the culture where children of color grow up. A more detailed review of each capital follows.

Familial Capital

Familial capital involves cultural knowledge, support, and nurturing gained through relationships of immediate, extended, and deceased family members as well as friends and members of the community. The time Black males spent with parents,

especially in culturally based activities, is more likely to contribute to cultural capital being absorbed than time spent with other people (Harris & Graves, 2010).

The literature indicates mothers of Black males play a significant role in their sons' lives, especially in the absence of fathers. All six of Land, Mixon, Bucher and Harris' (2014) study participants were elated to talk about the gratification they felt when they made their mothers proud. In the absence of fathers, they looked to their mother for encouragement and support. When they saw the struggles their mother or siblings endured, it created a source of motivation to succeed at almost any cost, "They indicated that seeing their mother and siblings struggle became a driving force for them to succeed despite the many challenges of their circumstances (p. 153)." This description of succeeding at all costs also overlaps into resistant and aspirational capitals, both of which include the desire and ability to succeed despite barriers or challenges.

Black mothers expressed how their own active attitudes and behaviors (Robinson & Werblow, 2012) influenced their son's academic success. They were proactive in expanding their own knowledge and skills so they could better prepare their sons for success. Although many had limited education, knowledge, and skills, they successfully navigated through the educational system and served as agents for their sons. The mothers were committed to putting their son's needs first including strong efforts to understand their personalities and environments to positively support them and deter negative influences. They believed it was their duty to care about their sons and do whatever it took to make them successful and they refused to focus on the sacrifices they made. In Robinson and Werblow's (2012) study one mother stated, "I am the only adult

figure in his life" while another mother said, "he needs me to tell him don't give up; go on and go to school, you're going to be ok (p. 63)."

The literature was not as kind to Black fathers from an assets based perspective. Fathers in general are less involved in the school affairs of their children than mothers (Abel, 2012). Black fathers are likely to be categorized as non-residential in the literature, but even non-residential fathers can positively impact the educational perceptions and aspirations of their children. Although research on positive father involvement was limited, it still suggests father's involvement has a significant influence on a variety of academic outcomes (Amato & Rivera, 1999; Dunn, 2004; Fagan, 2000; Nord, 1998) for their children.

Abel (2012) identified three factors which significantly increased the fathers' willingness to get involved with their child's educational endeavors: (a) receiving invitations to participate from the child, teachers, or the school; (b) fathers who had obtained advanced educational levels rated school activities more favorably than those who did not; and (c) fathers who had the time, knowledge, and energy were more likely to be involved in school activities. These factors reflect the lifestyle of upper or middle class fathers. Fathers who possess educational knowledge and experiences beyond high school, and have resources which afford them time and energy (not back breaking employment) to participate, are more likely to get involved with school related activities. It is also important for these men to feel needed. Their involvement increases when they receive invitations from their children or their child's teachers or schools to participate in school related activities.

Parental involvement, including parent-teacher conferences, helping with class assignments and homework, and frequent open discussions about educational expectations positively correlate with the educational aspirations of children. Family members conveyed that education was the students' most viable pathway to success and upward mobility (Garg, Kauppi, Lewko, & Urajnik, 2002; Nichols, Kotchick, Barr, & Haskins, 2010). Harper (2012b) found that an overwhelming majority of his study participants indicated it was never a question of whether or not they were going to college, the main question was where. Further, the students attributed the non-negotiable expectations of their parents as the primary reason for them going to college. This expectation developed despite the fact that nearly half of the participants came from households where neither parent attained a bachelor's degree.

From an assets based perspective, the literature indicates that mothers were the most significant contributors as well as motivators for Black males when family capital was viewed in terms of educational impact. Viewed through this lens, the literature on Black male family involvement is definitely an area which needs more research attention.

Social Capital

Social capital involves features of social life including networks of people and institutions which provide the support, nurturing, and trust that enable people to effectively pursue shared objectives (Putnam, 1995; Yosso, 2005). Church is one social institution through which religion and spirituality have permeated Black culture for years. Lincoln (1989) described the Black church as the mother of Black culture. Black churches are often viewed as a one-stop shop for learning educational skills and negotiating various aspects of life (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991; Harris, 2003; Putnam,

2000; Smidt, 2003). Through the church, young Black males were energized because church members preached that they were smart, capable and destined for greatness (Harper & Associates, 2014).

The support and benefits received from the Black church extend well beyond Sunday morning services. Lincoln (1989) referenced the enormity of the Black church's reach and influence on social capital and wealth in the Black community when he said:

> The Black church in its historical role as lyceum, conservatory, social service center, political academy and financial institution, has been and is for Black America the mother of our culture, the champion of our freedom, the hallmark of our civilization. (p.3)

The Black church offers a sanctuary, a place of rejuvenation, and comfort from the oppressive afflictions of society. It has provided the Black community with a political voice, base, and platform as well as emotional and financial support for families during crises. The Black church is a historical institution still owned and operated by Blacks, engaged in the business of providing hope for its constituents, who are predominately Black.

Spirituality plays a significant role in helping African American students cope with stress and persevere at the collegiate level. Black males were reported to have higher levels of spiritual beliefs and participation in religious activities than White males (Riggins, McNeal & Herndon, 2008). Black students often reflect on how God worked things out for them by ordering their steps, placing people in their lives who would make a difference, crediting God for their high GPAs, scholarships, honors, leadership in organizations, and the unusual opportunities which had been afforded to them as well as

imbuing them with the ability to get past the negative influences they encountered at school (Harper, 2012b; Land, Mixon, Bucher & Harris 2014).

Following church, sports is likely the next most significant influence on Black males. For those who desire to leave, sports are often seen as a way out of the *hood* for a large number of Black males (Riggins, McNeal & Herndon, 2008). The potential of stardom and riches impact the dreams of many Black males, their families, coaches, and community members. Sports often provide a pipeline to college for Black athletes. There are networks of people accessed through coaches, college recruiters, team moms and dads, and community members who facilitate and provide guidance to athletically inclined Black males.

It is very likely that the same coaches who organize athletic opportunities and provide access to educational opportunities are sitting in the pews of Black churches on Sunday mornings. In addition to the spiritual messages churches provide, it is also one of the primary places where connections to young Black males are plentiful.

Although baseball is declining, sports such as basketball, football, and track are common in Black communities. Beamon (2014) stated that African Americans make up only 12% of the population, but comprise approximately 77% of the National Basketball Association, 65% of the National Football League, and 15% of Major League Baseball. Coaches who organize athletic opportunities are valued as role models, and sometimes father figures, who provide a social network and access to colleges, scholarships, and potential professional contacts.

Last, community members represent important social capital for young men of color. Harper (2012b) noted the importance of successful Black males speaking to other

Black males, especially older successful men. These older and more seasoned Black males would reach out to them and were often *all in their faces*, encouraging them to get involved with both Black and mainstream organizations. The more seasoned Black males facilitated meetings with other campus administrators, faculty, and staff which expanded the social networks for the students. The hope, expectations, and sacrifices generated by members and social structures in communities of color often fuel the drive of Black males to succeed academically.

Sports and spirituality are pillars which provide significant social capital for Black males, but there is also a need for successful Black males to reach out and make themselves available to young Black males. The guidance, physical presence, financial, and emotional support they can offer build on the social capitals being acquired through sports and church, and strengthen the possibilities of success, including academic success, for a population which has yet to fully recognize its' greatness.

Linguistic Capital

Linguistic capital focuses on the skills of communicating in various styles and/or languages. The literature recognizes the unique styles of conversations and communication in Black culture. The ability to communicate within one's own culture as well as the dominant culture is a linguistic asset for Blacks who need to fit into both communities for upward mobility and acceptance. Linguistic flexibility (Vasquez, 2014) allows individuals to expand their social networks and employ capital to negotiate systems.

The literature used multiple terms such as Standard English, Black English, and Black English Vernacular, also known as Ebonics, to describe the multiple styles often

used by Blacks. In 1997, The Oakland school district recognized Black English Vernacular, or Ebonics, as a communication style which was often used as the primary cultural language of African-American students (Hopkins, 2009). A national dialogue and debate ensued, and continues today, regarding the dialect in its real and complex form. Blacks use both proper, or Standard English, and Ebonics linguistic skills to almost unconsciously and effortlessly communicate with multiple audiences in multiple environments.

In addition to maintaining cultural traditions in terms of talking, the use of words and gestures used by Black males are verbal strategies which can influence and persuade an audience. Based on the audience and the particular end result being sought, Blacks may use highly stylized words and gestures to influence one particular group and then switch, known as code switching, to use proper or Standard English to influence a different audience.

The variations in tone, language structure, and style are verbal communication skills that connect Black males to their culture and provide an array of coping and responsive strategies to counter oppressive behaviors (Wright, 2009). To hear a reference to *talking proper* should not be confused with using proper English in Black culture. Talking proper is a description used to indicate someone is trying to talk as if they were a White person. It is similar to being called an *Uncle Tom*, a *Sell-out*, or acting *White*. These are labels which are not positive references in Black culture, although it is recognized and accepted that there is a time and place to talk proper.

Blacks have had to use multiple linguistic skills and methods to navigate society. One method involves being able to communicate within their own culture and heavily

favors the use of Black English, also recognized in Black culture as Ebonics. Ebonics or Black English is not recognized in many arenas of the dominant society as a legitimate means of communication and may be viewed as a linguistics deficiency. Much like Yosso's (2005) argument against Bourdieu's assumption that communities of color are deficit oriented communities, Dr. Robert Williams, a Black scholar, has grown tired of White academicians describing Black language from a deficit perspective (Yancy, 2011). During a conference he organized, he gathered other Black scholars to discuss the negative connotations being used to describe Black English. Many of his colleagues were also frustrated with the depiction of Black English. As a result of this meeting, the term Ebonics, combining ebony and phonics, was born.

There are many Black people who are proud of, and understand, the differences between how and when they speak in predominately Black settings versus settings where dominant groups of people are present. Black English helps maintain a connection to Black culture and utilizing Standard English affords access and credibility in other settings when appropriate.

Linguistic capital is certainly an asset for those who have a unique identity or mode of communicating, such as Ebonics, or speaking another language, but they can also shift to different styles and languages to accommodate multiple styles or audiences. From an academic perspective, these linguistic skills are useful for students who attend predominately White colleges and universities and especially useful for those who return home and have to function in communities of color.

Aspirational Capital

> So, it's really strange but . . . like in my neighborhood, you were not popular for
> doing well in school or making *straight A's* or anything . . . you were popular for
> proving that you know how to *make it* on the streets . . . that's what you were known
> for around our way . . . so, going to school wasn't really cool . . . it didn't seem to
> make much sense.
>
> Koby, an anonymous Black male from an urban school
>
> Nashville, Tennessee (Strayhorn, 2009; p.710)

Aspirational capital is similar to resistant capital in that both involve being able to persist amid significant difficulties, barriers, or challenges. Possessing aspirational capital means being able to hold on to dreams even when the resources needed to obtain the dreams are not available. Family members, educators, and peers were identified as factors which can positively impact the educational aspirations of Black males.

Harper and Davis (2012) analyzed the intellectual interests and long-term career aspirations of 304 Black men, and found most of the men had a belief that anything was possible through education. They believed the education is the great equalizer. There are those in Black communities who view education totally differently from others in the same community, proving the distinction between the aspirations of the 304 participants in Harper and Davis' study and the message articulated by Kobe. For those interested in academics, it is important to seek others who share the same aspirations.

Research (Strayhorn, 2009) has shown that the academic achievement of students is strongly correlated with the educational histories and aspirations of their peers. According to a 2003-04 report (Chen, Wu, & Tasoff ; 2010) from a national sample of

high school seniors, Asians (96%) and African Americans (94%) are more likely than Whites (92%), Latinos (91%) and Native Americans (85%) to have postsecondary aspirations. Community or group assimilation may affect or reinforce values and beliefs among peers living in the same neighborhood or system (Coleman, 1997).

For Black males living in rural, urban, or suburban settings socio-economic status (SES) was the most influential factor affecting college aspirations (Strayhorn, 2009). The second most influential factor was academic preparation. It is important to note that Black youth are drawn disproportionately from lower SES families (Attwell & Domina, 2008; Strayhorn, 2009). Outreach, or bridge, programs such as TRIO, were created to reach students from low SES environments and expand college readiness to assist historically underrepresented students' matriculation and navigation through the educational pipeline (Gladieux & Swail, 1999). High school teachers, counselors, and administrators can assist students to identify and access resources like TRIO and other bridge programs to support educational aspirations.

Like family capital, educational aspirations are also influenced by the hopes of family members who recognize that education has a tremendous amount of potential to improve the lives of their children. Students were motivated to succeed academically when their parents and grandparents pushed them to achieve academically (Baber, 2014). Aspirational support from family members was strongest when it was accompanied by support from teachers, coaches, counselors, and other school administrators.

The literature identified financial resources, family, and peers as being the central elements of aspirational capital for Black males. The cost of college and the ability of students to afford a college education are real challenges for many Black families

because so many are categorized as low socio-economic status. Despite the costs, family and student expectations, dreams, and aspirations are still high and they remain steadfast in finding ways to finance higher education.

Students who have peers with strong educational aspirations are often positively impacted by their peers' desires to succeed. One of the themes repeatedly reported by males of color (Baber, 2014) was that they depended on peers, especially older peers, to give them *insider* information, like which classes to take, to help keep them moving in the right direction.

Resistant Capital

Resistant capital is using knowledge and skills gained by challenging inequality or by engaging in oppositional behaviors. Resiliency is a term that can be used to identify how Black males persist in the face of real, perceived, or unknown barriers. Resiliency is the self-righting ability for people to bend, not break, when faced with major life stressors (Kaplan, Turner, Norman, & Stillson, 1996; Vaillant, 1993). There is a need to better understand the important ways that Black males use to adapt and respond to their cultural and social environments. We know less about the coping strategies and perseverance strategies used by Black males whose lives are surrounded by hardship than those who become victims and succumb to their environments (Nogurea, 2003).

From a social ecological viewpoint, resilience theory conceptualizes the world as a complex dynamic system, made up of subsystems including small and large ecosystems and communities of people (Lyons & Parker, 2013). The systems and people interact with, and move through, periods of growth, collapse, reorganization, and renewal. Resilience is the ability of social and natural systems to function through periods of

change, and adapt to meet new challenges. Many Black males live in conditions and communities which are often in a state of constant chaos and change, and they must adapt to survive (Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993).

The skills many Black males use to persist in society are developed in *the street*. Street life can be viewed as *sites of resiliency* (Payne, 2005). Theoretically, sites of resiliency argue that the streets offer both psychological and physical space which together produces strength, community, and resiliency for Black men. Street life can also include a phrase used by Black males to refer to *the hood* (Payne, 2008). The hood and street life represent the neighborhoods and communities from which they come.

Street life includes a spectrum of networking behaviors or activities through bonding and even illegal activities (Payne, 2005). Bonding includes, joking around, hanging out on the block, *hooping*, or playing basketball, and organizing, sponsoring, or competing in community based activities. Illegal activities or behaviors, which also generate bonding, include selling drugs, burglary, and interpersonal violence. The street life, or sites of resiliency, is used by Black males as a source of survival, the result of having little access to quality economic and educational opportunities (Payne, 2008).

Resistant capital involves the ability to deal with life's stressors and being able to bounce back, which is a hallmark for Black people. After enduring prejudice, discrimination, and injustice, including the most oppressive act that has taken place on American soil, *slavery*, to dealing with highly publicized experiences like the recent killings of Black males at the hands of public service peace officers, Black males continue to bounce back and show resilience. Finding support and love from the communities provide a source of strength and togetherness that may not have been

experienced by any other group of Americans with the possible exception of Native Indians.

Street life is real. Being able to adapt to the demands, negative stereotypes, and perceptions that many people assume about Blacks, without giving up hope, is often fueled by the support found in communities of color among peers who experience similar struggles. Black males who grow up in communities of color must learn how to adapt and survive in their own communities before they venture out and experience other environments and cultures. Whether it involves physically returning to communities to help those in the struggle, or engaging in dialogues justifying the questionable acts committed by fellow Blacks responding to more oppressive behaviors, when you are Black the struggle never ends. But, giving up is not an option. Just as linguistic capital allows Blacks to communicate in multiple cultures, bouncing back and learning to function in communities are just as important as learning how to function in environments created for, and by, the dominant culture.

Navigational Capital

Navigational capital includes developing the perspectives and competencies to negotiate structures established by the dominant culture while maintaining one's own identity or one's own culture of origin (Diemer, 2007). Navigating both cultures is not always easy. Take, for instance, two observations of Black male participants in Diemer's study who wrote:

> People want you to succeed in your community, but it's kinda a double-edged sword, if you succeed and do well, and get a nice house or whatever, then it's like 'Well, you're too good for us now.'. . . Success, it breeds a lot of respect, but I also

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think it breeds a certain level of, I don't want to say contempt, but a certain level of

jealousy maybe. (p 9)

Second observation:

In order to function, and not lose your sanity, you hafta know how to, go between

both worlds. Ya hafta know how to work with Black and White . . . you're around

your Black friends . . . you can talk about what's really going on. And on the flip

side, you can break it down to somebody, like at Pepperdine, who'd never, ya know,

been to school with a Black person before. (p. 8)

Sentiments like these are eerily similar to the positions of, and statements made

by, participants in the African American Male Dialogue Series over the past six years.

Diemer's (2007) participants emphasized that developing emotional, intellectual, and

interpersonal skills to adapt to predominately White environments was essential. Just as

essential was maintaining their connections to their African American culture while they

navigated through predominately White environments.

Many of these capitals are used by people of color as a means of acceptance and

survival in their own communities. These same capitals can be used as asset based

resources in communities or environments which were not established with people of

color in mind.

Navigational capital is a broad topic and it was difficult to identify common

themes in the literature. The asset perspective of navigational capital represents the

ability to use any or all of the other capitals, whenever necessary, to aid the educational

journey for Black males. Navigating skills means using different cultural capitals at

appropriate times in an effort to improve the probability of students successfully

navigating institutions of higher learning. Having these assets-based cultural capitals as resources is one thing, knowing how and when to use them to aid in one's journey is another.

Family and people in social networks help guide and teach Black males when to use these capitals to enhance navigational skills. Knowing how and when to effectively use different communication styles is a means of navigating capital to attain favor, access to or approval by authority figures, especially in academic settings. Using resistant and aspirational capital to address oppressive behaviors or inequities without *losing your mind* requires navigations skills. In Black culture, the dominant meaning of the phrase *losing your mind* is to lose your temper. This is important because oftentimes Blacks are seen as aggressive and angry, but navigating the anger means using your mind to address the behavior. Navigational skills encompasse recognizing all of the cultural wealth available, and using the wealth effectively, at the appropriate times.

Black culture, as it pertains to education, is definitely impacted by the cultural capitals identified by Yosso (2005). Each of the capitals has been discussed individually, but they all complement one another and should be used in concert for forward mobility. Of all the capitals identified as cultural wealth, navigational capital is probably the most crucial. Navigational wealth is almost like the resource manual necessary to move through society in order to attain whatever goals have been established. Knowing when and how to use the capital skills is more important than having access to the skills but not understanding how to employ them to successfully navigate the ever changing terrain that people of color face.

Family capital was the most significant form of wealth, especially where the presence and impact of mothers was concerned. More research focused on the positive aspects of Black Fathers needs to be undertaken to contribute to the knowledge of how Black fathers positively impact the educational aspirations and journeys of their Black sons.

Social capital is significantly impacted by the Black church and research supports the significant presence and influence of the Black church on the culture of Black people. It impacts not only spirituality, which has a role in influencing the resistance and aspirations of Black males, but it also impacts Black culture politically, emotionally, financially, and morally. Lincoln (1989) refers to the Black Church as the mother of Black culture. Sports are also social capital, well represented in the literature. Sports provide hopes and dreams for athletically inclined Blacks including potential pipelines to colleges and pro careers.

Linguistic capital is another broad topic and the literature focus within Black culture and education is embedded in the multiple communication styles Black males display and have at their disposal. There is a balance that needs to be struck by males who engage audiences and environments dissimilar from environments dominated by people of color. Black males seek to preserve the cultural linguistic treasures and traditions of their heritage, but also have the ability to shift into entirely different communication styles and modes when they are outside of their communities and if appropriate.

Aspirational and resistant capitals are closely related in Black culture because one actually depends on and influences the other. The ability to resist oppressive behaviors is

fueled by the aspirations one has. To resist oppressive behavior so that one can gain access to education is an example. CRT uses race and racism as perspectives to analyze and understand the day to day activities and decisions that take place in American culture, and racism is alive and well in American culture.

Phrases like, *I don't see color*, or *slavery was so long ago why don't you just get over it*," are not taken lightly by people of color. Knowledge about, and experiences of, racist and oppressive acts and images ingrained in the minds of Blacks have negated their ability to move forward beyond a snail's pace (Bell, 1995), so many things are viewed from a CRT perspective. When oppressive acts happen to a person of color, it affects other people of color. The ability to navigate the frustrations, while still addressing offensive behaviors and acts, is required in order to move forward toward self-determined aspirations. In Black culture, resistant capital and aspirational capital go hand in hand and are assets which may have been forced on communities of color to both address and motivate Blacks.

Condition of Black Males in Higher Education

Palmer and Maramba (2011) asserted that there is a long history of valuing education by African Americans (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007; Freeman, 2005; Lee, 2005). Although education for Blacks was prohibited, beginning with the era of slavery through the Civil War in most states, Blacks still linked their pursuit of liberty and improving the quality of their lives to education (Perry, 2003).

One observation noted in the literature was the condition of Blacks after the Brown vs. The Board of Education decision in 1954, which was part of the Civil Rights movement era, preceding Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Lee & Foster, 2011). The education

based legislation was intended to help level the playing field for those who had historically been oppressed by America's educational system. Nonetheless, there were consequences that were not particularly beneficial for Blacks. Derek Bell indicated that the decision resulted in a large number of Black schools being closed and Black teachers and administrators losing their jobs (1995). Lynn, Jennings, and Hughes, (2013) also said; "African-American children became invisible in schools that were built for white people" and "African American children's culture and language were misunderstood and pathologized as deficient, and these students were ultimately framed as oppositional" (pg. 611).

This is an important observation when taking into consideration the cultural wealth that this study has reported. The impact on the Black community was beyond the educational goal of providing better academic conditions. People in the communities lost jobs which affected their ability to take care of, and provide for, their families. Other economic effects trickled down to impact tax bases, businesses in neighborhoods, numbers of Black role models as teachers and coaches, and the list goes on. The condition of Black males in higher education is impacted by so many things that are negative, both past and present. The time is now to focus more on stories of success rather than failures.

The condition of Black males in higher education today certainly provides reasons for concern pertaining to the rates of Black male matriculation to, and graduation from, institutions of higher education. This review does not include a significant amount of attention given to deficit based views and reasons why Black males are not sufficiently represented in higher education. However, a brief overview is presented to provide an

account of Black males' status in higher education, and the overview does not present a favorable view.

Robinson and Werblow (2012) indicated that the academy has given little attention to academically successful Black males. The problems, underrepresentation, underpreparedness, and inequities typically found in research journals, newspapers, policy reports, and other forms of media and publications describing the condition of Black Males in higher education read like a dirty laundry list.

In order to move toward the goal of increasing Black male college matriculation and graduation rates, completing high school is the first step. Compared to their White male counterparts, only 47% of Black males graduated on time from high school versus 78% for White males (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). For those who complete high school, research indicates that Black males often are less prepared for college level academic work (Bonner II & Bailey, 2006; Loury, 2004; Lundy-Wagner & Gasman, 2011; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009) when compared to other high school graduates.

In 1976 Black males made up 4.3% of the student population enrolled in institutions of higher education. Twenty-six years later, the percentage was the same (Harper, 2006; Strayhorn, 2010). Sports have been identified as a social network which provides a pipeline to college for many athletically inclined Black males, but the proportionate numbers are astounding when looking at overall enrollment, and the makeup of basketball and football teams. In 2009, Black males made up only 3.6% of undergraduates enrolled at public NCAA Division 1 institutions, but they represented

55.3% of football and basketball players enrolled at the same institutions (Harper, 2012b).

Comparing female to male counterparts within racial categories, Black male degree attainment across all levels of postsecondary education is the lowest of all in the United States (Harper, 2012a). It is also noted that in comparison to Black females, Black males reportedly take fewer class notes, do not spend as much time writing papers and completing assignments, are not as actively involved in or hold higher leadership positions in student organizations, and report lower grades (Cuyjet, 1997; Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004). For Black males who matriculate to higher education there are steps they need to take to increase the likelihood of them graduating.

Indeed they will face unique challenges. Black undergraduate males at predominantly White institutions routinely encounter racist stereotypes and racial micro-aggressions that undermine their achievement and sense of belonging (Bonner II, 2010; Harper, 2009; Singer, 2005; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007), but they have to face these challenges and still succeed. The completion rate of Black males in higher education is the lowest among all other sexes and racial groups in the United States (Harper, 2006; Strayhorn, 2010).

This is a snapshot for Black males in higher education and specifically as undergraduates. Black male rates in graduate and professional schools are also behind their White, Latino and Asian American male counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), but moving from high school to undergraduate school is the first step which needs to be taken.

Ladson-Billings (2011) wrote that the graduation rate of Black males is the lowest of any population and only 35% of Black men who enrolled in NCAA Division I schools graduated in six years. Additionally, in 2000, only 25% of the 1.9 million Black men between 18 and 24 attended college while 35% of Black women and 36% of all people in the same age group attended college. She believes the life chances are markedly different for Black males relative to other groups.

Summary

There is not a shortage of literature addressing the challenges, barriers, and deficit-based reasons why Black males are not matriculating and graduating at rates similar to their peers. The condition of Black males in higher education is certainly cause for concern, however there is starting to be more assets-based research focusing on Black males (Harper 2012b; Harper & Kuykendall, 2012). There needs to be an increased focus on building hope and providing a strong sense of purpose for achieving in school (Kafele, 2012). The assets based attention is significant because of the importance of understanding the factors that contribute to the success of those who are academically successful.

Assets-Based Approach to Building Hope

Researcher Shaun Harper's name, studies, articles, and reports appear repeatedly in database search results where Black male achievement and hope are focal points. In the 2014 study on Black and Latino males in New York City, Harper and Associates stated, "Viewing these young men through deficit-colored lenses sustains a depressing, one-sided narrative about their social and educational outlook. They deserve to be seen differently" (p. 3).

Howard, Flennaugh and Terry (2012) identified five principles which are not exhaustive, but strongly suggested, for scholars and practitioners to consider in an effort to recast the negative stereotypes of the Black male social image. Principle one is to abandon theoretical approaches to Black males that are deficit oriented. Deficit oriented studies have often sought to convey what Black males and their communities lack as opposed to what these populations are able to accomplish despite the political, social, and economic barriers they encounter (Hernstein & Murray, 1994). Work that highlights models for success leads to positive changes in the condition of Black males, and their communities. Despite the difficulties Black males face they have found ways to achieve in today's school settings where environmental and cultural factors play significant roles in their academic successes (Noguera, 2008). Researchers should be cognizant of and consider other factors that impact the development of Black males and avoid demonizing and vilifying individuals and their communities.

Principle two is to avoid perpetuating a false dichotomy where the challenges for Black males are focused on either individuals or institutions. These two areas contribute to circumstances facing Black males. However attention should also be directed at the inordinate amount of time Black males devote to television, diminishing the amount of time given to studying.

Principle three is to acknowledge the complexity of identity, and notions of self, among Black males, especially in educational settings. For well over a century the fields of education and psychology have not been able to contextualize the complexity that Black males face in institutions of education and their efforts to construct their identities. W.E. B. Du Bois (1903) said that attention should be paid to the internal conflicts that

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Black males face in the United States. He went on to talk about a double-consciousness which recognizes the psychological and socio-historical realities of oppression suffered by Blacks and the complex ways Black people developed notions of self in America (Howard, Flennaugh &Terry, 2012). Researchers should examine the comprehensive nature of Black male identity in depth, but another area which deserves attention is researching Black males of mixed heritages.

There is a gap in the professional literature addressing the social and psychological adjustment of Black-White biracial students, exploring the complex nature and formations of their identities (Williams, 2009). Williams said, "biracial students encounter unique challenges in the current educational system and researchers need to conduct empirical research on the schooling experiences of Black-White biracial students to gain a clearer understanding of the education of these students" (pp. 799-800). Identifying, examining and understanding the complex, multi-faceted aspects of Black male identity can be critical to recreating the social imagery and aiding in the upward mobility of Black males.

Principle four is to prioritize Black male voices as central for engagement and analysis in research and practice. Much can be gained from tapping into students' narratives to understand the internal processes that some Black males go through in order to achieve in school (Howard, 2008). This is the form of narrative inquiry which is used for this study. Narrative inquiry is an effective way to understand how identities are constructed because the voice of the student is put in a position of authority and power (Hoshmand, 2005). This method of storytelling is critical because it allows marginalized

voices to express their anger and helps dismantle dominant discourses about race, class, and gender groups.

The fifth principle is to pay attention to the intersectionality of factors such as race, class, and gender when examining identity-construction and sense-making with Black males. Because Black males possess multiple identities which are significantly impacted by race, socio-economic class, and gender, it is important to understand how these markers impact identity construction, social imagery, and meaning-making for them. The intersections of Black male identities and the social and political arrangements in America have critical implications for gender and minorities, and in particular for Black males (Howard, Flennaugh &Terry, 2012).

Understanding and making an effort to incorporate these five principles in research and practice could have a huge positive impact on building hope for Black males. These principles are important elements of literature which take an assets-based approach, and encompass the depth and complexities appropriate for understanding the live experiences of Black males.

As limited as the literature was from an assets-based perspective, and the limitations were noted in much of the literature (Harper & Associates, 2014; Howard, Flennaugh &Terry, 2012), it is my opinion, as a Black male, that the five principles above provide an accurate and legitimate foundation to expand the research on Black males from an assets-based perspective. The principles move toward understanding the boundaries, present and historical perspectives, and complexities of interpreting what impacts Black males was effectively captured by the five principles. It is difficult enough to have conversations with Black males to pinpoint what is needed for upward mobility,

but it is even more difficult to explain the challenges, choices, and decision making that Black males face and use to overcome and succeed.

The principles include looking into communities of color and recognizing the wealth which resides there rather than focusing on or framing deficit narratives. Principle two is an accountability piece for Black males and is an area lacking in research that needs to be addressed. There are some things that Black males have absolute authority and power over, including their time. Succeeding academically requires time, specifically time for class and studying. Black males must accept these contexts involving what society or institutions provide or do not provide. Principle three speaks to beginning to understand the complexities, specifically identity complexes, which are not easily articulated but are certainly internalized by Black males, especially in academic settings. The fourth principle builds upon the third by stressing the importance of having conversations with Black males. Conversations allow the master narratives to be heard and not muted (Bell, 1995). The literature may be lacking, but the theories that are being formed about Black males are being formed with minimal input…the conversations are important. The last principle is Critical Race Theory at its core, considering how race, class, and gender impact the decision making for Black males and how they view their world. There has to be an effort to *first* understand *then* to seek to be understood.

It is not lost in the literature that the people who have the most success with Black males are other successful Black males (Harper, 2012b). Those who are really interested in the successes of Black males do not have to be Black males, but they must be willing to make the effort to understand their complexities and give them an opportunity to explain themselves as best they can.

Critical Race Theory

The late professor Derek Bell is known as the intellectual architect (Hughes, Noblit & Cleveland, 2013) of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Bell was a legal scholar who believed that racism is embedded in the legal and social structure of the United States (Bell, 1992; Bonilla-Silva, 1997). Along with other scholarly colleagues, including Richard Delgado, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams, he wrote extensively on initiatives to improve the lives of African Americans (Bell, 1995). They believed that the social structure of America has been racialized, meaning that the social, economic, political, and ideological levels of society in the United States are structured by the placement of actors in racial categories (Bonilla-Silva; 1997). Whiteness is positioned as normative and everyone else is ranked and categorized in relation to the points of Whiteness (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was an outgrowth of critical legal studies, initiated by legal scholars who were frustrated with the slow progress of civil rights initiatives in the era following the Brown vs The Board of Education litigation. CRT is a theory that challenges the traditional notions of scholarly and research objectivity which usually reflects the experiences of Whites. Its framework is grounded in a historical context which emphasizes the experiences of people of color (Taylor, 1998).

CRT scholars used nontraditional research methods, including narratives and storytelling, as a way to challenge and explain constructions of race (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lynn, Jennings & Hughes, 2013). The narratives and storytelling approach were used to tell stories and share the experiences of people whose experiences were often not told (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Urrieta & Villenas, 2013). Bell used CRT to develop

counter-narratives to address master narratives and support the importance and significance of the lived experiences of people of color, challenging the narratives of the dominant culture, using race as the central focus (Lynn, Jennings & Hughes, 2013).

Master narratives or scripts are described as stories or scripts which specify control, exploring how *some* social processes are carried out (Stanley, 2007). Master scripting meant that the stories of African Americans were muted and erased when they challenged the dominant culture's authority and power (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Those legitimizing the stories or scripts may use them for political gain or to manipulate public consciousness with the intent of heralding a national set of common cultural ideas.

The literature found on CRT was plentiful and supports the decision to use CRT as the epistemological perspective for this study. Using storytelling and the voices of Black males to share their experiences provides a format for using counter narratives to challenge master narratives. More importantly, CRT validates the power and authority of the males' stories and lived experiences which are more significant than challenging the master narratives.

Additionally, CRT is grounded in the importance of how race, class, and gender affect the perceptions and realities of Black males, and in understanding how society views Black males. CRT also supports the five principles listed and discussed earlier in this chapter as significant principles which can provide an impetus for understanding how Black males succeed.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provided a review of the literature as it pertains to Black culture, and specifically Black males in higher education. The cultural wealth available in

communities of color is discussed from an assets-based perspective and contributes to the literature focusing on building models of hope. Although there has been an increase in the number of studies taking an assets-based approach to viewing Black males in education, most of the literature still noted the lack of attention given to Black males from a non-deficit perspective.

The communities many of Black males come from are not similar to the collegiate environments they have found themselves in. In order to cope successfully with an unfamiliar environment, they use many of the capitals and experiences from their communities to navigate college. The ability to navigate multiple communities is necessary for survival in both communities, and, having cultural capital and its associated skills, provides Black males with significant means to be successful.

Surviving without diminishing one's own culture is important for Black males. Balancing the needs to succeed academically, especially at predominately White institutions, without compromising or sacrificing one's own culture through assimilation, is an on-going battle. But, understanding they are armed with assets developed in their communities, will aid in the successful journey for many more Black males for years to come.

III. METHODOLOGY

The method used for this research was narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry looks at first-person accounts, or storytelling, according to individuals' self-understanding, and so give voice to marginalized persons (Maynes, Pierce & Laslett, 2008). The participants in this study have engaged in dialogues as a part of the African American Male Dialogue series that have provided them a space to talk about and tell stories about their own realities. Narrative inquiry is a rendition of how life is perceived and seeks to capture the whole story, including important intervening stages in life which are frequently omitted by methodologies which focus on, or stop at, certain points (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Narrative inquiry is particularly important to this study because as Riessman (2008) pointed out, narratives can serve individual purposes to remember, argue, justify, entertain, persuade, or even mislead. But they can also have political power when the stories are connected to the power of the wider world. Further, the stories reflect the power the participants have as they decide for themselves how to tell these stories and what to include.

Critical Race Theory is a framework that allows for examining, challenging, and theorizing how race and racism impact social structures, practices, and discourses (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Yosso, 2005). Critical Race Theory is appropriate for this study because it privileges experiential knowledge and values the voices of marginalized people, as they define their own socially constructed reality (Love, 2004). Yosso's (2005) six dimensions of cultural wealth in communities of color, as described in Chapter 2, provided the conceptual framework.

Participants

The participants in this study have all been participants in the University of the Southwest African American Male Dialogue Series organized by the Division of Student Affairs which began in 2008. Criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to select four participants who identify as Black or African-American male and have been participants in the dialogue series. The four participants chosen shared their interest in participating in the study primarily because they would be able to tell their stories and not be controlled or guided by anything other than what they wanted to share. They expressed a sense of power and authenticity in knowing they controlled what they would share.

The series was designed to help Black male students navigate the road to graduation by providing a forum where they could discuss academic and non-academic topics. The students discuss, share, criticize, and debate issues with the goal of supporting one another and minimizing the likelihood of allowing concerns to interrupt their college education. Topics include how their societal and cultural identities affect their ability to accomplish life's challenges, especially their educational goals.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collected for this study were acquired during two individual interviews with each participant. I chose individual interviews as the primary data collection technique because understanding one's lived experience is at the root of interviewing (Seidman, 2007). The individual interviews took place in my office, which is familiar to all four participants.

Interviews

For the first individual interview, participants were asked to set aside a minimum of one hour to talk. I asked open-ended questions that focused on the forces, agents, and experiences that contributed to the participants' development and matriculation at the University of the Southwest and the lessons learned that affected their decisions. The interviews were semi-structured addressing a set of predetermined questions (See examples in Appendix B). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to expand on the questions (Courneya et al., 2005) and probe more deeply into the participants' responses. This created a relaxed, spontaneous environment that contributed to the free flow of information and resembled a natural conversation. Using the same questions to structure the interviews allowed for a more systematic collection of data and enabled comparisons between participants (Patton, 2002). The structured questions were guided by the cultural capitals Yosso (2005) identified as being present in communities of color, specifically aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital.

The second interview was used to clarify responses and interpretations shared during the first interview. Again, a minimum of one hour was set aside, but none took that long. The second interview allowed the opportunity for participants to expand on answers from the first interview, share information they may not have thought about during the first interview, and cover any information they considered relevant to the study.

Notes, Memos, and Logs

Each interview was recorded. Minimal notes were taken during the interviews in an effort to make sure the conversations flowed naturally. My familiarity with the

participants allowed me to probe more deeply into topics which may have been unclear. This minimized the need for many follow-up or clarifying questions during the second interview. These interviews and my notes were the data for this study.

Data Management

All interviews were recorded and stored on the audio recorder, my personal password protected home computer, my password protected work computer, and in a password protected computer program. The recorder was locked in my office filing cabinet.

All interviews were professionally transcribed. Upon receiving the transcriptions, I assigned pseudonyms to each participant and stored the transcripts by pseudonym. Transcripts were stored on the same devices noted above.

Handwritten notes were maintained in a physical paper file and placed with the handwritten notes obtained during individual interviews and stored in a locked filing cabinet in my work office. Initially, utterances, stuttering and pauses were going to be including in transcripts. I decided not to request those from the transcriber, if I had a question or concern about an utterance or silence, I addressed or clarified my concerns during the second oral interview; I had no need for clarification.

Analysis

The analysis was guided by viewing the study's research question in relation to the six forms of cultural capitals identified by Yosso (2005). Specifically, I identified how the capitals positively impacted the development of the participants and their matriculation to higher education. Using the participants' master-narratives (Delgado, 1988; Harper, 2012b; Lynn, Jennings & Hughes, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, 2001;

Stanley, 2007), I intertwined in my presentation of findings excerpts from their narratives in order to illustrate the analysis.

I developed a matrix (see Figure 4.1) using an Excel spreadsheet. The matrix allowed me to categorize participant responses under one of the six forms of cultural capital in response to the study's research question. I used Miles and Huberman's (1994) process of analyzing data to help. Their process is guided by three steps: data display, data reduction, and conclusion drawing or verification.

Because the transcribed narratives and handwritten notes were expansive, it was important to be able to view the data in its entirety. The Excel matrix format made it easy to view multiple responses simultaneously. I was able to reduce the data by identifying and consolidating similar responses and then finally reviewing the data for conclusions. Data were not placed in more than one category. When relevant responses could possibly fit under multiple capitals, I referred back to Yosso's (2005) definitions and determined under what capitals the information fit best.

	Cultural Capitals					
	Aspirational William	Navigational William	Familial William	Linguistic William	Resistant William	Social William
Research Question						

Figure 2. Coding Individual Cultural Capitals.

After completing matrices for each of the four participants, I separated the six capitals for each individual participant into six separate Excel spreadsheets categorized

according to each capital (See Figure 4.2). I placed like capitals for each participant side by side to identify dominant themes, once again using Miles and Huberman's (1994) process.

	Cultural Capitals			
	Family William	Family Henry	Family Lewis	Family Michael
Research Question				

Figure 3. Coding Study Cultural Capitals

This analytic procedure allowed me to develop succinct individual narratives, followed by grouping like capitals, and finally analyzing the data obtained through the interviews.

Trustworthiness

Patton (2002) indicated that evaluators should strive for balance, fairness, and completeness in an effort to increase the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (2013) identified four criteria that can be used by qualitative researchers pursuing trustworthiness in their studies: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Shenton (2004) states that member checks are the single most important provision for credibility. In member checks, participants verify that the written words, emerging theories, and inferences identified by the researcher are accurate accounts of what the participants intended. During the second interview I discussed my interpretation of

information obtained during the first interview as well as information in the written transcript as the primary means to verify the accuracy of my interpretations of what the participants shared.

Transferability means being able to apply the findings to other contexts, situations, or settings (Merriam, 2009). Guba and Lincoln (2013) indicate that using thick descriptions is a technique used to identify patterns of cultural and social relationships to place them in context. Geertz (1973) described thick descriptions as data that are our constructions of other people's constructions. The Black males participating in this study provided in-depth, thick, and sometimes very personal descriptions of their development and journey in the individual interviews. There was only one-time when a participant was discussing a matter during an individual interview and said to me, "I don't want to talk about that anymore."

Dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 2013; Shenton, 2004) reflect the rigors taken to insure that the findings of the study are supported by the data provided by the participants and do not represent the biases of the researcher. During the second interview a member check was conducted and including reviewing data taken in the first interview and determined whether the information was interpreted according to the participants' intentions.

Human Subjects Protection

This study was approved by the Texas State Institutional Review Board. Participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary; they had the option to choose not to participate, or not to answer specific questions, and they could

withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or jeopardy to their standing at Texas State University or with any organization/entity with which they were associated.

Participants were also notified that they could stop participating in the study at any time by simply stating their desire to no longer participate, and any information previously provided would not be included in the study. For questions regarding this research study, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries, they were informed to contact the Texas State Institutional Research Board chair or compliance specialist. The results of the research study may be published, but participants' identities will remain confidential. Participants had the right to see a summary of the findings or results of the study by requesting the information from me at VM05@txstate.edu.

In this research, there were no foreseeable physical or psychological risks. Although there was no direct benefit to the participants, a possible benefit of their participation was increased understanding of obstacles and challenges Black males may face when considering enrolling in college. In turn, increased understanding may assist educators, policymakers, parents, and other Black males to identify successful steps which may result in a larger percentage of Black males enrolling in college.

Summary of the Chapter

Narrative inquiry was the qualitative approach used to collect, manage, analyze and store data provided by the selected participants during individual interviews. The philosophical approach guiding the study was critical race theory. Data consisted of the transcripts from 8 interviews done with 4 participants in the African American Male Dialogue Series at a large public university in the southwestern United States. Yosso's six cultural capitals structured the data analysis.

IV. FINDINGS

This chapter begins with portraits of the four participants. I present the findings according to Yosso's theory of cultural capitals of the participant interviews.

Participant Portraits

There were four participants who all self-identified as either Black or African Americans. All were participants in the institutionalized African American Dialogue Series. Portraits of the participants and researcher follow.

William

William was a 24 year old senior majoring in Sociology when I interviewed him. He was born and raised in a predominately Black neighborhood in the inner city of a large city in Texas. His mother died when he was 13 years old, so he and his younger sister moved out of state to live with his father. He told me, "My mother was a drug addict my whole life. She never did it in front of us, we got used to her like being gone two or three weeks at a time… we just had to fend for yourself". His older sister continued to live in the city were they were born, and after three years, William returned to that city as well, leaving his younger sister to live with their dad.

William attended an all-Black high school, known in the area for athletics and producing numerous Division I level collegiate athletes. He excelled in both basketball and football and was recruited by and accepted a full football scholarship to an out of state Historically Black College.

After his first year, the school decided to reduce his scholarship by 25%. Rather than accept the reduced scholarship, he transferred to a Texas school that offered him a full football scholarship. He never visited the school, but upon arrival to the small rural

town in what he described as a rural country setting in the summer, he decided that it was not a place for him. Before the fall semester began, he had transferred to Public University in a non-athletic capacity.

At the time of the interview, he had been a participant in the African American Dialogue Series for three and a half years, and his career goal was to be an Artist Representative or Talent Manager. During a number of dialogue series discussions William is described as a well-known and respected member in the university's African American community and he is viewed as a veteran member of the African American Dialogue Series by other participants.

Henry

Henry was a senior majoring in Business Marketing; he graduated in May 2015. He was born in a large Texas city, but his family moved to a rural town when he was young. He grew up in a predominately White neighborhood along with a brother six years his senior, his mother, and father. His parents were high school sweethearts, who attended a predominately Black high school together. His brother went to college on a full academic scholarship and Henry was extremely proud of his academic accomplishments. His mother graduated fifth in her high school class and had always stressed the importance of education to Henry and his brother. His dad was a four year varsity letterman in three sports, and his focus always revolved around sports.

Henry attended predominately White elementary and middle schools. His high school was a majority Black and Hispanic school, and Henry indicated that even as a Black person, he went through culture shock. He had never attended a school where the minority was the majority.

When I interviewed him, he had been a member of the African American Dialogue Series for four years, served as an Ambassador for the College of Business, and held many executive level positions for various student organizations including a number of African American focused student organizations. He was a respected student leader on the University's campus and looked forward to success in corporate America.

Lewis

Lewis was a sophomore who grew up in a predominately White suburb in Texas. His parents were divorced, and he lived with his father during his early years in high school before returning to live with his mom after a disagreement with his dad had resulted in him being kicked out of the house. He was multiracial: his mother was half Black and half White, and his father was White. Lewis was closest to his older brother and younger half-brother and attributed that to coming from a divorced home. His career aspiration was to be a licensed family counselor.

Lewis described his extended families as being both racially and culturally diverse and he had to adapt to different cultures depending on which family he was with. As a biracial male, he shared that there are times when he is not Black enough for his Black friends and times when he is not White enough for his White friends. He said that he gravitates more towards Blacks because the struggles that Blacks experience are similar to his own struggles. He shared a scenario in which he often asks himself:

> If I was to do something great in my life would I be considered like a Black man?
>
> If I was to do something terrible in my life would I be considered a Black man?
>
> It's just a question I always wondered. Like how would the news portray me if I
>
> did something great and I died or whatever and I couldn't portray myself? Would

they portray me as a White man or a Black man, and if I did something terrible in my life, would they portray me more as a White man or a Black man*?*

He accepts being who he is regardless of the perceptions of others.

The neighborhoods he grew up in and schools he attended were diverse, but mostly White. He said he loves sports and the fact that his coaches treated him like a grown up, rather than like a child, had left a lasting impression on him. He told me that he relishes being treated like an adult. His older brother was an athlete and had a reputation of being a trouble maker. Lewis inherited his brother's reputation when he first entered high school, but was able to shed the label in a short time, a fact that he was proud of. He had been a member of the African American Dialogue Series for two years and was still establishing himself on campus when I interviewed him.

Michael

Michael was a sophomore majoring in electrical engineering when I interviewed him. He was also from a divorced family. He told me that his mother is half White and half Mexican, and his father is Black. Both of his parents were in the military, so he grew up in a number of places. His dad left the family when he was three, and his mom had a daughter before she married her current husband, who was Michael's old AAU basketball coach. He described having a stepbrother (and former AAU teammate) who was the same age as Michael and a step-sister who was the same age as his half-sister. Through his mom and stepdad's marriage, he had another sister and brother. Michael described the family as one big happy family and said his relationship with his younger brother was almost like a dad and son relationship, and he loved it. His maternal grandmother had

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always been important to him and his mom. At the time of the interview, she served as a caretaker for his current family.

The city Michael remembered most was a large city in central Texas, where his family currently resided. The neighborhoods where he grew up were predominately Mexican, with predominately Black neighborhoods close by. He described himself as being extremely popular in high school:

> In high school I was top dog, I won the Principal's award, Favorite Student of the
> Year, Drum major my senior year, played varsity basketball and all. And then, came
> here and I came back to reality, yeah, not top dog no more.

Michael started the African American Dialogue Series at the same time that Lewis did. He credited the dialogue series with keeping him in school as he had been ready to leave school six weeks into his first semester.

Researcher

I am a 52 year old Black male who grew up in a large city in north Texas. I was the only child born to my mother, now deceased, and my father who lives in a large city in southeast Texas. I have been married to the same woman for 17 years. We have a 15 year old daughter and a 14 year old son.

I grew up in an all-Black neighborhood and attended an all-Black high school before matriculating to a predominately White institution of higher education in north Texas. I have worked at the institution where this study was conducted for the past 25 years in multiple capacities, the last 19 as an administrator in the Division of Student Affairs.

I have been a member of this institution's Coalition of Black Faculty and Staff for over 23 years and have served two terms as the organization's President. I serve as a facilitator and one of the founding members of the African American Male Dialogues Series.

Cultural Capitals

In this section I illuminate the cultural capitals described by the men in the study.

Family Capital

Family capital was important for these men and included mothers, grandmothers, uncles, aunts and siblings. Three of the four participants identified female figures, especially mothers, as the most significant members in their families (Murry, Kotchick, Wallace, Ketchen, Eddings, Heller & Collier, 2004) and the persons who tended to be the most involved in the daily activities of their lives. Those same three participants shared that their motivation to succeed in college and life was to make their moms proud. Although William's mom was deceased, he described her as a shining light that everyone loved; he could not imagine how much more advanced he would have been in life if she had not died:

> We was really close, like she was probably one of the coolest persons I ever met in my life. That's why, like I can just imagine if she was here now where I would be. I think about the knowledge she placed in me when I was twelve, ten, or eleven, and now I'm twenty-three, you double that, man it'd be crazy,

His primary motivation for finishing college was that he had promised his maternal grandmother (whom he described as his backbone) that he would graduate.

Henry was the only participant whose biological parents were still married and he credited his mom (Murry, Kotchick, Wallace, Ketchen, Eddings, Heller & Collier, 2004) with being the person who motivated him academically to succeed. His mom graduated fifth in a large high school class and constantly stressed the importance of school:

> My mom, she was always on me about keepin' my grades up. If I came home with
> a bad grade, you know, my parents believed in punishment. I got plenty of
> whoopins growin' up. They didn't believe in time outs. I got whoopins probably
> until ninth, tenth grade I believe.

Because his dad worked long hours, including the graveyard shift, and his brother was away at college, he felt like he grew up as an only child. He felt an obligation to take care of his mom. She was the one person he could talk to about anything.

Michael kept a picture of his mother, maternal grandmother, and great aunt on his nightstand and stressed, "Everything I do, I do to make them proud." Michael said that he communicates with his dad but there is no strong bond, however, he genuinely looks forward to out of state trips under the guise of visiting his dad, even though he actually stays with his paternal grandmother. He spends more time with his grandmother and uncles during the visits than with his dad, but said he is okay with that.

Lewis was quick to point out that he is from a divorced home, and he attributed being close to his older brother and younger half-brother as being a result of having been from a divorced home. He was proud that his mother recently graduated from college with a degree in Social Work, and he wanted to be the second member of his family to earn a college degree. His maternal and paternal grandmothers are both White, but he

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described them as being as different as night and day. He said he loves and respects them both dearly.

Henry told me that his relationship with his dad is strong, but it primarily revolves around sports. He described having a tremendous amount of respect for his dad because he recognized the sacrifices his dad had made for their family, including numerous back surgeries, in an effort to make sure his family was well taken care. Henry's brother is six years older than him, and left for college with an academic scholarship. They recently began to establish a strong brother to brother relationship. He described his brother as very smart and someone he looks up to.

Extended Family

Uncles played important roles in the lives of two of the participants. Richardson (2009) noted that African American uncles are vital forms of social support and social capital especially in the lives of African American male sons living in households headed by single females. Lewis told me he has an uncle whom he met when he was thirteen and he described him as being pro Black, "He is just straight like Black: "He is just straight like Black power, like all up in your face, you know, all about the freedoms and stuff like that. So, it was real cool seein' him and learnin' from him, too." He described him as being a male figure who taught him life lessons through a game Lewis loves, chess. His uncle would assign names to the chess pieces, which represented different people in life, and taught him how particular pieces could move about the board and influence the movement and successes of others. His uncle treated him like a grown man and that was significant to Lewis.

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In addition to his dad's brothers, Michael said he has an uncle who is Italian and lives in a state where Michael spent some of his early years as a youth; his uncle has been a father figure to both Michael and his mom. Michael described him as a man who is smart and does not take anything off of anyone; if Michael's mom cannot drive a point home to him, she will call this uncle, and Michael has never questioned or challenged him,

> He's a very smart individual and whatever advice he gives me I pretty much listen to it, because I know he knows what he's talking about. Like everything he says it's gonna hit home for me. Plus he doesn't play.

Family capital was the capital which was strongest for all four participants, especially as it pertained to making their mothers proud. All of the participants wanted to complete college to make their moms proud, and grandmothers were second to mothers. Grandmothers often serve as the second line of maternal defense in African American families (Pearson, Ensimger, & Kellam, 1990; Richardson, 2009), especially those without males as head of household. The uncles of two participants served as male role models, and a steadying force within the family structure. They taught the participants life lessons that contributed to their development and continue to be important male figures in the lives of these males.

Social Capital

Many researchers consider the family to be their child's most important supplier of social capital (Oseguera, Gilberto, Conchas, & Mosqueda, 2011), but there are also sources outside of the home family which contribute to social capital. For these men, sports and the church provided contexts of social capital for the men in this study.

Sports was a source of social capital identified by all of the participants and besides the family, was the most impactful influence on their lives. Whether it was traveling across the country playing basketball, or experiencing and learning how to handle racism in small rural towns, sports and their coaches were significant. For example, William talked about how important his basketball coach had been.

My basketball coach, I think that's probably the closest person who's been like consistent throughout my life since I met him. He's been more of a, well, he was a father figure in high school, he had to be. Like none of us had fathers, I mean, out of fifteen players probably like three of the players, you know, had their pops, you know. That leaves twelve us, you know, that he had to be father figures to.

Lewis also described the importance of one of his coaches, who in fact, became one of his role models.

One of my high school coaches named Coach Moss always seemed like he was like the big brother to everybody. He just brought an attitude to practice and to life that basically made you want to work harder. You know? Made you kind of want to be like him.

For Michael, social and familial capitals overlapped as others in his family excelled in sports.

My stepdad is Black and was actually my AAU coach when I was about seven. That's when we first met him, and his son's like an all-star. My stepbrother, he's my age, a little younger, and he's like all-star in basketball, got a scholarship. So it's six kids, they already had four and brought two more in. Yeah, the relationship's great.

Coaches served as a social network of people who were influential and provided these young men with transferable skills applicable to life like teamwork, trust, accountability, and a strong work ethic. They learned the importance of being accountable to others by realizing their teammates depended on them to take care of their individual responsibilities in order for the team to be successful.

The young men all shared an appreciation for the respect that their coaches showed them. In return, they learned to be respectful to others. Sports also provided the young men with opportunities to travel and see the world that existed beyond their cities and neighborhoods. They learned appropriate ways to behave and realized how their actions could impact the perceptions of others as it pertained to Black males.

Another significant social institution that was important to these young men was the church. Historically, the African American church has been a social institution involved in efforts to support upward mobility for members and has emphasized pro-education efforts (Loury 2004a). Church has provided the participants with a social network (Riggins, McNeal & Herndon, 2008), which supported them emotionally, psychologically and financially. African Americans have also viewed church as the single most influential social institution preaching the value of education (Loury, 2004a), even more-so than the schools the participants attended. One participant in my study, Henry, explained,

> In my church, academics was definitely pushed. As far as in the school system
> that I went to, it wasn't pushed for African-Americans to go to the next level, but
> in my church, they definitely pushed. Even in Sunday school, every Sunday, they
> were always talkin' about helpin' out with scholarships with African-Americans,

so some of the Black students could go to college. I actually was one of the few to

get a scholarship from my church. It actually helped me go to college.

Lewis looked at religion and Christianity a little differently. His paternal grandfather

basically disowned his father and told him he was going to hell when the father left the

Catholic Church to become Baptist. Lewis could not understand the hatred, questioned

Christianity, and stopped going to church. Since coming to college he is viewing his

spirituality and Christianity in a new light, and church is slowly gaining favor with him

once again. He said,

> We went to the same church since I was born. My grandmother, you know, the
>
> typical Black southern grandmother, donates probably 80% of her life to the
>
> church. Church had an impact on me, all the college kids in my class, they threw
>
> us a going away party, gave us a little money, stuff like that. My mentor today is
>
> someone I met in church because my Grandmother and his Grandmother are
>
> friends through the church.

All of the participants communicated that they had a spiritual connection and

depended on God to guide their steps through life, and that they were confident because

they knew God was in control.

Linguistics Capital

All of the participants described themselves as being great communicators and

very confident in their ability to talk to multiple people in multiple settings. Lewis

explained,

> Well, I'm good at communication, actually I'm great at it. Just when it's time to
>
> talk business, I can talk business. When it's time to just chop it up or whatever, I

do the same way. Depending on who it was, what kind of image I was tryin' to

portray is the way I'm gonna present myself.

Henry thought of his communication ability as a gift from God:

I love to talk, I'm a warm person. I like to network with a lot of different people.

You've got to take advantage of, you know, what God has given you, and I feel

like he's given me the ability to talk to people. So, I just take it and run with it.

For William, being able to communicate was something he got from his mother:

My mom taught me how to talk to people. I mean, she just said don't be cussin'

and stuff like that when it's not the right time, not the appropriate time. Just talk

with some sense when it's time to talk with some sense. That's pretty much it, she

didn't just like write or read a book or anything.

Finally, Michael's words serve to sum up the

skill:

I think I'm pretty good at communicating. I talk a lot, I'm good with words. If I

need to get out of a situation I need to get myself into a situation, I can pretty

much talk my way out or into something.

With the exception of one, they all grew up in racially diverse communities and

also credited these experiences with developing their communication skills. The

participants shared how being able to talk is an asset when they need to get out of a

situation, or manipulate a conversation to get something they need. Two of the

participants are multiracial and described the differences between visiting different

family members as being like living in multiple societies. For example, Michael

contrasted how he acts when with the Black or Mexican sides of his family:

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So, like when I go to my dad's house in Florida it's strictly Black people, and you
know I have to kind of mesh in with them. When I go to my Mexican side, which
is my grandma in Arizona, they're just, it's just a completely different world, you
know. They want me to speak Spanish out there, and I'm just like... I can
understand it a little bit, and then I've a smaller white side of my family that I only
talk to just because my mom knows them, and I mean they're just loving. They
don't really care.

The skill of communicating effectively in more than one culture is a valuable asset in an
increasingly globalized world.

Aspirational Capital

Aspirational capital is the ability to hold on to hope in the face of real or
perceived barriers (Yosso, 2005). The participants all described having career goals and
believing that they would succeed in reaching their goals. These four young men came
across to me as very confident in themselves and their abilities. Even William, who lost
his mother at 13, came across with confidence as he compared himself to his friend, who
lost both of his parents in a car accident. He said he could not complain about his
predicament because his friend lost both of his parents at the same time:

My mom taught me a lot before she died. I just knew that I would never go
without all my life. If I did, it had to be my fault, it had to be my choice that I'd go
without. Not because life enabled me to go without, she taught me that I'm a firm
believer in if you want something badly enough, you will get it no matter what it
is. It's all about confidence. I'll definitely make it, you know, or I'm going to die
trying.

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The other participants were not as illustrative as William, but I picked up no hesitation regarding their confidence and ability to be successful. None of the participants identified any situations where they questioned their abilities to be successful. I was impressed to recognize William's positive outlook on life given the traumatic event of losing his mom at such an early age, and his response showed the type of strength this young man possessed.

All of the young men told me about their career goals and expectations, and they were all confident that they would achieve their education goals, too. When viewing aspiration from the viewpoint of *holding on to hope in the face of real or perceived barriers*, these young men did not seem to believe that anything could stop them from attaining their dreams as is evident in William's words:

> I guess I'm a young man with a lot of ambition and goals and just the will to succeed…. I made it this far, plus I'm a firm believer in if you want something badly enough, you know, you will get it no matter what it is. It's all about confidence.

For Lewis, achieving his goals would enable him to help others:

> I'd say my biggest challenge was myself, just convincing myself, you know, that it's important to kind of buckle down on what I'm doing in order to get where I need to be, because, you know, I could just be lazy and procrastinate, and then if I did that then I wouldn't be here today. I just decided that (counseling) is a passion of mine that I want to do. I see the struggles of people who have lived in divorced homes and I want to be someone that they can look up to and say that like, I changed their life.

They also told me that the support they receive from family is crucial as evidenced in Michael's words:

> This is my real dad. I say he didn't, yeah, he pushed it, but he didn't like, you know, I don't think he really cared what I did. Sometimes I have like feelings towards him like I, for me what would make me happy is to like make something of myself and show him that I really don't need him in my life. That's really, really what drives me. Like I want to be, I know it sounds wrong, but I want to be better than him. I do. I do.

Henry explained that being successful for him mean that he could help better his family:

> I'm tryin' to make moves, and tryin' to better myself, and to help one day be able to better my family. But, I've always wanted to strive to be better. You know what I'm sayin'? Oh, I never let anybody bring me down.

Family often plays a crucial role in engendering confidence in young Black men (Cheng and Starks, 2002; Solórzano, 1992).

Per Yosso (2005) "aspirations are developed within the social and familial contexts, often through linguistic storytelling" (p.77). The combination of strong family and social capital had the men in this study believing that they could achieve their goals. They all impressed me as strong young men.

Resistant Capital

Resistant capital acknowledges skills fostered through oppositional behaviors. This form of capital and did not seem to be a dominant theme in the lives of these males. One of the participants talked about some racist experiences he had had in high school, but he had been able to move through those experiences fairly easily by talking with his parents and grandparents. Generally speaking, the participants said that they had not experienced many oppressive actions or behaviors and so did not describe themselves as having resisted. Instead of resisting, one of the men, William, described leaving an oppressive situation. He told about his experience at a school he attended without first visiting it to check it out. William had transferred to a school in Texas and described the setting as rural:

> It's real, real, real country, and I'm from Dallas South Oak Cliff, all Black. That was my first time being exposed to like that country life, and I was like, "Yo, I can't do this, man. It's, nah." I mean I like football, but only because I was good at it. I didn't have the love for it. It's a lot of dirt out there. It's just like white boys in cowboy hats, and, you know, they look at you all type of ways, you know, because I mean, I guess the racism is still slightly heavy out there.

So before he encountered any type of oppositional behaviors, he changed schools.

Henry described dealing with a lot of racism while growing up, which he dealt with, but wanted to leave:

> There were a lot of the white students and I believe they did feel a certain way toward African-American students just because it's kind of a country town. I dealt with a lot of racism growing up. I played baseball, so, we had road games goin' to some of these schools off in the country, and I actually led the league in getting

hit senior year by baseballs. So, it's just like I felt like, and I just dealt with a lot of

racism growin' up, and I wanted to get away from that.

Henry is named after his late grandfather and it was his grandfather and

grandmother who used to tell him something that touches on aspirations and resistant

capital, "They've just always told me to be hard workin', be twice as good as other white

students and just never give up on your dreams." The stories and directions he received

gave him the strength to get through oppositional behaviors he encountered. Interestingly,

Henry chose to attend the University of the Southwest because he and his family believed

it would be beneficial to attend a diverse institution.

To succeed and not complain about real or perceived difficulties suggests the

strength that these participants described having been instilled in them by members of

their families and communities. Family members, coaches, and churches all had a role in

supporting the participants and increasing their confidence.

Navigational Capital

Navigational capital focuses on the skills necessary to maneuver through social

institutions, especially institutions not created with communities of color in mind (Yosso,

2002). The men in this study described diverse experiences and strong networks of

people as having contributed to their development and the skills that had enabled them to

successfully navigate institutions up to this point in their young lives. Whether it was

living in, attending schools in, or traveling with sports teams to rural, country towns, or

participating in sports events in large cities such as Las Vegas or New York, the sports

experiences exposed the participants to different people, settings, and cultures. These

experiences seemed to enrich their growth, confidence, and abilities, and helped them comfortably adjust to multiple environments.

Sports were important. Lewis attributed sports to his ability to navigate the social world. He learned to "keep in line":

High school was never really hard… So, I never really was very, very serious about it, but at the same time I understood that education, you need it. So, I would say basically football was probably the main thing that really had an impact on me, because it really kept me in line of where I needed to be. Who knows what kind of trouble I would have gotten into if I didn't have a reason to stay out of trouble. Basically, he (Football position coach) just brought an attitude to practice and to life that basically made you want to work harder. You know? Made you kind of want to be like him.

William's coach helped him see the opportunities sports could open to him:

I was on one of the elite teams in Dallas, so we traveled probably three-fourths of the year, you know, across, all over America, you know, playin' basketball. The school I went to was a dominant basketball school. He (basketball coach) definitely inspired me, because he is the one who kind of like opened my eyes to have me realize that you can actually go places as an athlete.

Henry, on the other hand, both learned that he could be successful, but also, how to deal with racism, an important navigational skill for young Black men:

I dealt with a lot of racism growing up, just because, I played baseball. We had road games goin' to, you know, some of these schools off in the country, and I actually led the league in getting hit senior year by baseballs. So, it's just like I felt

like, and I just dealt with a lot of racism growin' up, and I wanted to get away

from that… I didn't grow up talkin' to my pops about certain things just 'cause he

was always pushin' me with the sports and just doin' good. He was always on me

since I could walk, playin' sports my whole life.

Sports, by far, provided the strongest social network for these young men and was second
only to family.

Michael described learning the important navigational capital fostering the

relationships that contribute to "a big happy family". His stepdad was also his AAU

basketball coach when he was seven years old, and he attributes the big happy family life

he experiences at home today to his mother's marriage to his stepdad: "The relationship

is great. Yeah they love me." In addition to Michael and his sister, his mom and stepdad

added another son and daughter to the family:

I mean it was just crazy that they even decided to start over. They were almost

done. They had my sister for like two more years and that was it, but, yeah, they

started over with the kids, they're really active. I mean my little brother is pretty

much, might as well be my son. That's how much I take care of him and stuff.

Yeah, the relationship's great.

Three of the participants grew up in diverse neighborhoods and credited their

environments as being major contributors to learning how to navigate through society and

institutional structures. The rich experiences that the multiracial males referenced when

visiting with their different families, including topics of discussion, family interactions,

food, and extra-curricular activities provided them with transferrable skills they said they

continued to use today. They described the different environments they experienced

because of the White, Black, and Mexican sides of the families in which they had to navigate. Because of the diverse areas in which they grew up, their family experiences, and social networks like the African American Male Dialogue Series, the participants told me they were confident in their abilities to effectively navigate higher education and any stressful environments they may find themselves in (Lewis & McKissic, 2010).

William grew up in all-Black neighborhoods, but he was able to travel quite a bit because of his athletic skills and so was exposed to different populations during his cross country travels. He told me that before his mom died, he felt as though she taught him the importance of respect and understanding how to engage in conversations with grown-ups, people of different races, friends, and authority figures. When William transferred to a school he later described as "country", he moved expeditiously to remove himself from the setting, which illustrates his use of navigational capital.

The participants' interviews suggest they have been very successful navigating through social institutions. From a CRT perspective, navigating institutions that were not created with people of color in mind has not so far been an issue for any of the participants. They have used mentors, coaches, school administrators, family members, and their social networks as resources to navigate social institutions (Riggins, McNeal & Herndon, 2008).

Summary of the Chapter

My major findings were that these young men have developed a true sense of self-confidence in their abilities to succeed and they have an intrinsic belief that they control their own destinies despite what society or any individual(s) might expect of them. Family capital, especially mothers and grandmothers, was by far the most significant cultural

capital which impacted the men's successful transitions from their neighborhoods to higher education. The desire to make their mothers and grandmothers proud is the driving force behind their desire to complete their college educations.

Social capital was driven primarily by coaches who the men indicated exhibited the positive behaviors and accountability attributes which they now use as guides for their own behaviors and making decisions which affect themselves as well as others. Church was the most constant social institution where education was stressed, even more than from within the schools they attended.

All of the men were very confident in their "self-assessed" ability to communicate with multiple audiences and in multiple environments. Their linguistic abilities and confidence allow them to move comfortably in diverse settings and communicate effectively with diverse people.

Resistant and aspirational capital are closely related, the former refers to knowledges and skills to address oppositional behavior and the latter is the ability to maintain hope in the face of real or perceived behaviors. Three of the men indicated they really had not been involved in any oppressive experiences. Impressively, all four expressed intrinsic confidence in their abilities to succeed despite what society or any individual might expect of them.

The experiences, knowledges and capitals accessed above have all positively impacted the navigational skills necessary to move through social institutions, especially those which are predominately white. Family members, coaches, church, developing communication skills appropriate for different audiences and developing a positive

demeanor to address challenges all have positively impacted the skills the men use to positively navigate life.

The communities from which these participants came, have contributed greatly to their cultural wealth. But, it is important not to rely solely on what they have learned and experienced and bring from their communities to our college campuses. The commitment to their growth and development must be ongoing. These students need to be retained through graduation and that requires ongoing guidance, support, and intervention to complement and build on what was learned in their communities. The African American Male Dialogue Series is an important campus community which builds on the capitals developed in the communities where they grew up in and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

V. INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter looks at how specific cultural capitals contributed to the participants' development and matriculation to higher education, making reference to the relevant literature. I also include a discussion of the significance of capitals identified.

Family Capital

Family capital was the most consistent and significant capital identified by all four participants. This supports the existing literature (Oseguera, Gilberto, Conchas, & Mosqueda, 2011). Mothers were the most common individual identified as having the greatest impact, while grandmothers were second. Two of the four participants indicated that the primary reason they wanted to graduate from college was to make their moms proud and to take care of them, a theme that also appears in the literature (Murry, Kotchick, Wallace, Ketchen, Eddings, Heller & Collier, 2004; Robinson & Weblow, 2012). As Michael poignantly said, "It was just me and my Mom growing up. I'm very close to her. Everything I do is for her, and well, my grandmother, and great aunt too." Henry also noted, "My dad worked nights so it was just me and my mom, I could talk to her about anything. She was always pushing academics, so I have to do well for her." William lost his mother early in life and his motivation for graduating was because he promised his grandmother that he would:

> Yeah, so I think what's keepin' me here, yeah, the thing that's keepin' me here is just finishing because my grandma asked me to finish. I mean, the typical southern grandmother who's there when I needed somebody to talk to. I mean, it's like she's my backbone.

Research indicates that maternal grandmothers often serve as the second line of defense and as a support for African American families (Pearson, Ensimger, & Kellam 1990; Richardson, 2009).

Lewis was the one participant who did not specifically mention his mother as his primary motivation for academic achievement, instead he indicated that he was closest to his older brother and younger half-brother, and attributed his closeness to those two as being because he came from a divorced family. Lewis also had a strong relationship with his uncle, as did Michael, who had three uncles who helped with his development. Named for his grandfather, Henry's parents were still married, and he wanted to make his dad proud because of the sacrifices he now understood were made for the family. His grandfather was a decorated veteran of two wars and stressed education, a work ethic, and doing well in school so that Henry could one day take care of his family (Bullock, 2007). Like others have found, Black family members made a difference in the lives of the young men in my study (Richardson, 2009).

Significance of Family Capital

Females contributed much to the skills the men reported learning in their families. This finding is supported in the literature (Murray, Kitchick, Wallace, Ketchen, Eddings, Heller & Collier, 2004; Richardson, 2009; Pearson, Ensimger, & Kellam, 1990; Robinson & Werblow, 2012). The female figures should be commended not only for their efforts to maintain a structured family unit, but also for serving in multiple capacities in the raising of these young Black men.

One of William's coaches was the one male figure who was like a father or close family member. Two of the other young men who were not as close to their fathers as

Henry was, fortunately, uncles, brothers, grandfathers, and even younger half-brothers

provided nurturing support, a finding also supported in the literature (Bullock, 2007;

Richardson, 2009). As Lewis noted, "Yeah, my uncle just, he just had me look at life a lot

differently, and just basically taught me some man stuff that I was never really taught."

Michael spoke of other influential male figures: "So, but yeah, like he's pretty much been

my father figure and my mom's father figure. So, he's been, he's had a real impact, and

whatever advice he gives me I pretty much listen to it. But, he had the biggest impact.

Like everything he says it's gonna hit home for me." Three of the four young men

considered their relationships with the men in their family to be significant in their

development and growth.

Social Capital

Sports can provide a pipeline to college or a way to get out of the hood for Black

males who aspire to leave (Beamon, 2014; Riggins, McNeal & Herndon, 2008). Coaches

could be said to constitute significant social capital for three of the four participants.

William indicated that his coach served as a father figure for almost his entire basketball

team because only three of the 15 on the team actually had fathers:

> Coach Mays, my basketball coach, I think that's probably the closest person who's
>
> been like consistent, throughout my life since I met him. He's been more of a,
>
> well, he was a father figure in high school. He had to be. Like none of us had
>
> fathers. I mean, out of fifteen players probably like three of the players, you
>
> know, had their pops, you know.

Lewis, too, named a coach as having been important to all of the team:

Actually, one of my coaches named Coach Moss always seemed like he was like
the big brother to everybody. Basically, he just brought an attitude to practice and
to life that basically made you want to work harder. You know? Made you kind of
want to be like him.

William's coaches may have come and gone at different times, but they enabled
him to travel and have experiences beyond his community. Lewis said he had desired to
be treated as an adult his entire life, and during high school, his coaches were the only
ones whom he felt treated him like an adult. They held him accountable, taught him the
importance of coming through when others depended on him, and spoke to him as though
he was an adult. He said he would have probably left high school had it not been for his
coaches.

Michael's social network also involved his high school band director and
principal more than his coach, although he played varsity basketball. For Henry, since his
AAU basketball coach when he was seven was now his step dad, and he had a large
happy family, this coach had a significant impact on his family structure.

So, he just really, me and my dad, we had really like a, we had a connection
growin' up mostly with like sports. He was always on me since I could walk
playin' sports my whole life. So, it was more of like, I didn't grow up talkin' to my
pops about certain things just 'cause he was always pushin' me with the sports and
just doin' good.

Henry said he was not impacted as much by his other coaches, but sports were still a huge
part of his upbringing because his relationship with his Dad centered on sports. The
social capital gained through sports, and the network of people associated with sports,

played a huge part in the development of these young men.

All of the participants identified church as important, and providing significant social capital, but its effects were different. In the Black community church can provide numerous services beyond spirituality. Lincoln (1989), as noted in a previous chapter, wrote that the Black church could be looked upon as the mother of Black culture, providing spirituality, learning, and negotiating skills which can be used in various aspects of life. Others have also identified the Black church for its significant role in Black culture (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991; Harris, 2003; Putnam, 2000; Smidt, 2003). Church can also serve as an institution which inspires Black youth and uses narratives which describe them as worthy, smart, intelligent, and capable (Harper & Associates, 2014).

Lewis questioned religion after his grandfather told his dad and aunt that they were all going to hell because they left the Catholic Church for the Baptist Church. Henry and William's churches were instrumental in not only stressing higher education, but there were some small financial benefits they received from their churches.

> As far as in the school system that I went to, it wasn't pushed for African -
> Americans to go to the next level, but in my church they definitely pushed. So,
> they always pushed for me and any kid in the church to go to college, you know,
> and they even helped me out a couple times when I didn't have money.
>
> Henry
>
> We went to the same church since I was born. You know, the pastor gave me my
> first little ceremony, you know, baptized me all that good stuff. They had an

impact on me. All the college kids in my class, you know, they, you know, threw

us a going away party, gave us a little money, stuff like that.

William

Both William's mentor and wife were introduced to him through his church. Besides his high school basketball coach, they are the only non-family members that William recognizes as being a constant part of his life. Michael went through a recent experience where he lost his uncle and had been questioning why and felt lost. He feels a sense of understanding after having a long talk with his mom who insisted on him going to church with her. He indicated that going to church really helped him see life in a broader context than just the death of his uncle.

Significance of Social Capital

The social contracts and networks of people associated with these young men substantially impacted their development and desire to attend college. Extended family members, school administrators, church members, and mentors have created social contracts in the form of expectations for success from these young men. Emotional, psychological, and financial resources have been extended to the participants. In return, the young men feel obligated to succeed because of the networks of people who have invested in them. For this group of men, sports, and specifically coaches, have provided the greatest social capital.

The participants shared that sports and coaches kept them from dropping out of school, affected their behavior because of the fear of what their coach might do to them, taught them the importance of teamwork and accountability, enabled them to see opportunities outside the boundaries of their neighborhoods, and affected the way in

which they navigate society. My opinion is that these are attributes fathers should instill and model first.

Besides the home, church is viewed as the institution which emphasizes academics the most. The church should be recognized as an institution which can impact and complement efforts that take place in the home (Lincoln, 1989; Riggins, McNeal & Herndon, 2008). Meaningful relationships were developed in churches and two of the participants received economic support through scholarships they earned from their churches. There Black church is an institution where the participants consistently heard the message that education was important and necessary in order for them to move forward.

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Linguistic Capital

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All four of the participants considered their ability to communicate as their greatest asset. None of them speak multiple languages, one of the possible characteristics of linguist capital, but they consider their ability to use multiple skills in multiple settings as a strength. They believe their linguistic skill is a strength which enables them to comfortably adapt to, and navigate through, multiple settings and people successfully. Although Henry believes being able to adapt to different audiences is something Black people are born with because of their culture, my assumption is these linguistic skills were learned through families and communities. They also give credit to their communication skills for being able to get what they want or to get themselves out of situations. William attributes his communication skills to his mom.

She didn't just like write a, read a book or anything, she just, she said, 'Simple, you just got to, you know, your boys gonna be your boys. Say Yes sir, no, sir, and not to

just like White people, but just authority or your superiors. Listen, someone tell you to do this, then you do it, but at the same time fend for your own.' As far as the lingo of it, don't be cussin' and stuff like that when it's not the right time, when it's not the appropriate time. It just talk with some sense when it's time to talk with some sense, you know.

William

Talking about his communication skills, Lewis said, "Well, I'm good at communication actually. I'm great at it. Just when it's time to talk business, I can talk business. When it's time to just chop it up or whatever, I do the same way."

And, Michael said,

I think I'm pretty good. I talk a lot. I'm good with words. If I need, like if I need to get out of a situation I need to get myself into a situation, I can pretty much talk my way out of it. I'm very easy to talk to.

And, Henry said,

Like I'm a business student, so when I'm around my white friends, I definitely do talk differently. I wouldn't use much slang or curse words as I use as when I'm around my brothers, my fellas, you know. But when I get out of that environment, and I'm just around my fellas, "Hey, what's good? I feel like, even my Black friends, they know how to go in and out of different communication settings. They just know. It's just something I feel like we were born with.

The AAMDS was identified as a place where they could not only practice their communication skills comfortably, but also a place where the *old-heads* (references to

faculty and staff) have helped expand their vocabularies and encouraged them to use words which better express their thoughts.

The participants are aware that there are differences between *choppin' it up*, *talking proper*, and adapting to different environments and audiences, and are confident they adapt *naturally* (Wright, 2009). The participants expressed a level of pride in being able to *chop it up*, which means using slang and alternate words which are a part of their communities and cultures. They also recognize there is a time to use language appropriate for a different audience which calls for a different style. Henry shared that talking proper should not be confused with using proper English, but rather talking in a style reminiscent of Whites.

Significance of Linguistic Capital

All of the participants have confidence in their ability to communicate and indicated the knowledge and importance of being able to identify who the audience is and adapt accordingly is important. Their linguistic skills are vital if they are to successfully navigate institutions of higher education and pursue upward mobility in a diverse society.

The participants from the multiracial families not only depend on their communication skills to navigate and operate within institutional structures, but also to communicate effectively in their family structures, which are made up of Blacks, Whites, and Hispanic family members. For people of color it is important not to forget their culture or where they come from and speak accordingly, but also to recognize when it is time to shift communication styles based on the audience. The participants believe they are able to move in and out of different styles naturally, but it is my opinion that it is a learned experience.

Aspirational Capital

The aspirations to finish college have all been impacted by family expectations or experiences. Michael wants to finish to make his mom, grandmom, and aunt proud but also to prove to his biological dad that he can be successful. Henry is motivated by his parents' sacrifices and wants to finish so that he can take care of them. Taking care of his family was also something stressed to him by his recently deceased grandfather for whom he is named. He believes his grandfather is looking down on him and he wants to succeed and make him proud. William promised his grandmother he would finish. Aside from that, he does not believe having a college degree is necessary to have a career as an Artist Representative. Lewis comes from a divorced home and references the divorce for some of the behaviors he and his sometimes problematic older brother exhibit. Ironically, his career goal is to be a licensed family counselor because he likes helping people.

The aspirations of the participants center on careers and have primarily been impacted by family, coaches, and church members. Henry and William are seniors who are about to graduate and enter a different phase of life. Lewis, a sophomore seems adamant about wanting to be a licensed family counselor. Michael, also a sophomore, has actually talked about changing his major to music and possibly going into the military to help fund his college. His mom is an Air Force recruiter.

Significance of Aspirational Capital

Family expectations and experiences impacted the aspirations of all four participants. Church and sports, or coaches, have also influenced the participants and provided them with a sense of worth and confidence that they can succeed. It is important for immediate family members to be aware of how their presence, interactions, and

involvement have a lasting effect on Black male aspirations. Extended family, members of the community, and community institutions also instill a tremendous amount of confidence by acknowledging their intellect and ability, and by demonstrating their belief that the young men are accountable and can be counted on.

Navigational Capital

The participants are confident in their abilities to effectively navigate stressful or difficult environments they find themselves in. Three of the participants grew up in diverse neighborhoods and credit their environments as major contributors to learning how to navigate through society and institutional structures. William's environments were mainly Black, but he was able to travel quite a bit because of his athletic skills and was exposed to different populations during his cross country travels. Before his mom died, he feels as though she taught him the importance of respect and understanding how to engage in conversations with grown-ups, people of different races, friends, and authority figures.

The family structures represented by these young men are vastly different, with two students having family members from multiple races. The two multi-racial participants describe the different environments they experience because of the White, Black, and Mexican sides of the families they have to navigate through. One participant describes his multi-racial family experiences as living in three totally different societies.

Unlike William, who remained in his predominately Black neighborhood, Henry moved to a rural setting and grew up with Whites from a young age. He shared that he went through culture shock, as a Black male, when he went to a high school which was predominately Black and Hispanic. He is the only participant who indicated that the he

ever experienced racism; He attributes being Black and traveling to small all-White towns as being the reason he led the district in being hit by baseballs.

Sports competitions have impacted all of the participants' ability to navigate their surroundings, whether it is traveling across country to play in cities like Las Vegas and Chicago, or traveling to small rural towns and leading the district in being hit by baseballs. The participants have had to learn how to conduct themselves in a manner where their individual goals, or the team's goals, were not compromised.

Significance of Navigational Capital

Diverse experiences and people contribute to the development and skills for Black males to maneuver environments which were not developed with people of color in mind. The rich experiences the multiracial males talked about, when visiting with their different families, including topics of discussion, family interactions, food, and extra-curricular activities, provided them with transferrable skills to use in society. Exposure to different cities, both large and small, yet very different from their own neighborhoods, enriched their growth and ability to adjust to different environments.

Resistance Capital

The participants related they have not experienced much resistance or many difficult times in life, which was surprising. I may be surprised, but it may be the way they have learned to look at life.

> Probably my, I'd say my biggest challenge was myself, just convincing myself, you know, that it's important to kind of buckle down on what 'm doing in order to get where I need to be, because, you know, I could just be lazy and procrastinate, and then if I did that then I would be here today.

William said, "I just knew that I would never go without all my life. It had to be my fault. It had to be my choice that I'd go without. You know? Not because life enabled me to go without."

And, Michael added,

> I mean, I had challenges, but it wasn't too serious. The first time I took my SAT I wasn't happy with it, but then like right after I took my ACT I did really, really good on it. So, I mean that, that panic moment from that first test to the ACT that was probably the only struggle I had. Because the first SAT I just didn't know what I was doin', so I pretty much bombed that, but then the ACT's more science and math based and that's what I'm good at, so, yeah, I just did really good on that one.

The participants shared experiences in life but none where they really experienced any resistance with the exception of Lewis, who mentioned a couple of experiences with racism. The way these young men approach life was refreshing, they are confident and have support systems from their communities which have sustained and prepared them to take on life.

Significance of Resistance Capital

It was remarkable to hear their confidence and how they view life. They have been inspired to move forward in life and to be accountable for themselves. To succeed and not complain about real or perceived difficulties, and consider the ability to do so as just natural, is indicative of strength instilled in these participants by members of their communities. Family members, coaches, and churches all have had a role in supporting

the participants and increasing their confidence. Family members, social networks, and other people from these communities are impacting the way participants view challenges and are spending time and resources providing alternative ways to address challenges and making a difference.

Unique Finding

This research focused on the cultural wealth accessed in communities which aided the participants' journey to this institution. Although I did not set out doing this research to focus on the African American Male Dialogue Series, it became apparent just how important the series is, in addition to the cultural capitals acquired in their communities. These young men bring capitals with them from their neighborhoods and upbringing, but they are still developing. The AAMDS provides a forum where Black males share how they have navigated the educational process and how important the series is for them. Following, are excerpts of what the participants shared about the AAMDS:

> Honestly, I'd say that it probably helped me stay here, like just being completely honest I was ready to leave, like I was done, I was like, 'I can't do this.' I wasn't comfortable here, I didn't know anyone, and goin' to the dialogue series that pretty much just opened me up to everything. Like whatever someone else was thinking, I was thinking, it gave me friends, people there I knew they introduced me to other people. I just started meeting everyone this past semester, and that's when I started lovin' it. I was like, 'Oh, y'all just, y'all really just put me in like this.' I appreciate that, you know. You guys are great.

> Michael

It's definitely an aid for me and I would recommend any guy who doesn't have a father figure or who does have a father figure to join. Not just for the need of the father figure, just the need of relief, just the need of being able to see successful African-American men be successful. There's only so much you can tell me in a short term meeting, but to see someone on an everyday basis and see how they get up and work, see how they just deal with other people on a day-to-day basis, I think that is very important if you want to be successful yourself. So I'm just like being an intern to success, it's like, 'You want to do it. Okay, here are Black males who came from situations like yourself doin' it, you know, on a day to day to day basis that you are able to talk to anytime.'

William

I feel like that's been a big influence on my life. It's keepin' me grounded, keepin' me in college, talkin' to other Black men like myself, tryin' to better themselves and get to the next level as far as like their careers, their families, and just havin' a successful life, you know. So, I feel like the African-American Male Dialogue Series has been a place for me to vent, you know, talk to other brothers about different situations goin' on in college.

Henry

I think it is a learning tool of life lessons, it is one of the reasons that I feel like I've matured so much is because I went to something and was able to talk to people who have actually been through it. One thing I know is that there's not really any judgment, so, you can just say what you want to and you just get feedback however anybody feels. You learn a lot about yourself and realize that you're not the only

person who thinks a certain way. You just hear so much funny stuff, and you go

back like a lot more relaxed, and kind of ready to take school on again.

Lewis

These testimonials, along with the full accounts of the participants, indicated they

depended on their communities to help during probably the most important stage of their

development. But, the work has to continue in order to retain them through graduation.

The participants do not describe the AAMDS as a community of color, they prefer to

refer to it as a Brotherhood. Regardless of their semantics preference, the AAMDS was

created to serve the Black male community and has been impactful in their continued

journeys. I recall the CBFS Black male members referencing their own journeys,

although cultural capital was not their choice of words, they acknowledged the need to

share or transfer those knowledges to students.

Summary of the Chapter

All six forms of cultural wealth identified by Yosso (2005) were present in the

narratives of the participants. The two multiracial participants introduced unique

perspectives to this study and there is a need for more research which addresses the

unique challenges that biracial students encounter because of their mixed heritages

(Williams, 2009). The capitals they were able to access in their communities were

impacted by both the dominant White culture as well as the minority Black and Hispanic

cultures. Their family dynamics have enabled them to navigate, communicate, and adapt

in multiple communities. Lewis shared there are times when he is not Black enough for

his Black friends just as there are times he is not White enough for his White friends, but

he loves who he is. Michael, who is multi-racial, confidently refers to himself as a mutt

because he is White, Black, and Hispanic, and does not consider the reference to be negative because he loves all of his family heritages. These young men expect to succeed and resist any negative references or messages of who they are by others.

When the students were asked to share what came to mind when they heard *Communities of Color*, a common response from three of them was that it was a community basically void of White people. Three of the participants shared that communities of color is an old term, one even said it was used in the 1950s but not today. The multiracial students both inquired where they might fit in a community of color because of their White heritage. One participant included visions of poverty when he hears the term.

Last is the role and place of the AAMDS. It was recommended by all four participants that other Black males should have the AAMDS experience. Each of the participants indicated that the AAMDS is one of the most valuable resources they have in terms of their educational goals and personal development.

In conclusion, these participants found excellent cultural wealth through their communities. They came across as appreciative, well-mannered, and confident young men, which is likely a direct reflection of wealth afforded them via their communities. Family and social capitals are without doubt the two most significant forms of capital possessed and used by these young men. Family extended beyond mothers and fathers and included coaches, uncles, brothers, and church members. Their actual linguistic skills are second to their self-appraised perceptions of their linguistic skills. They take pride in, and have confidence that they can talk with a multitude of people and audiences in any setting with confidence. They are cognizant of their abilities to assimilate to their culture

when the time is appropriate and shift to a different style of communication when necessary.

For the most part, their aspirational capital has been influenced by their desires to make their mothers proud. Involvement with sports provided a significant amount of confidence that all four participants exude. They learned through sports that other people depend on them to do their part and that their team depended on them. They use that accountability in other aspects of their lives and do not make excuses.

What should be understood is that these young men are only a few years removed from their communities and probably go back frequently during school breaks, but the lessons learned are helping them through school now. It is also important to note there will be challenges in their lives as they continue to grow. As educators we should help build on the cultural wealth they brought from their communities while we have them.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research question for this study is, "What forms of cultural capital contributed to the participants' development and matriculation in higher education?" I found that although in varying degrees, the six forms of capital Yosso (2005) identified were all present, but not necessarily significant for these young men. I applaud Yosso (2005) for challenging Bourdieu's argument that upper and middle classes have the knowledges and capital considered valuable in a hierarchal society. Bourdieu may be correct in his assumption that people in middle and upper classes are more likely to impact policy, laws, and the master narratives which may support his theory.

Conclusions

In a democratic society almost anyone has the opportunity to impact the master narrative but they have to gain access to, and impart influence on, hierarchal social structures including government, education, and law. This is one reason why Critical Race Theory is so important, it utilizes the narratives of marginalized people including those who intersect at race, class, and gender. Critical Race Theory encourages critiquing the master narratives (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Urrieta & Villenas, 2013). Marginalized people do not have to acquiesce to Bourdieu's theory and nullify the knowledges and capitals they have determined to be valuable in their own culture and communities.

One challenge is determining how to illuminate and bring to life marginalized voices especially if those voices' positionality in the hierarchy is low. Socio-economic status was the primary influence affecting educational aspirations of students in Strayhorn's (2009) study, indicating that social class counts. However, Bourdieu's

observation of what capitals and knowledges are valuable may not be viewed the same for people who find themselves in the non-dominant populations and are not ready to yield to someone else's invalidation of their knowledges and capitals.

For the participants in this study family was the capital with the biggest impact and contributed to their social capital as well (Oseguera, Gilberto, Conchas, & Mosqueda, 2011).

Specifically, being successful so that their mothers and grandmothers were proud of them was the driving force behind three of the participants' educational aspirations (Murry, Kotchick, Wallace, Ketchen, Eddings, Heller & Collier, 2004; Pearson, Ensimger, & Kellam 1990; Richardson, 2009). The last participant did not share a lot about his relationship with his mother, but he did note that he was proud of her because she recently graduated with her baccalaureate degree. Their mothers were the people who they talked to most and who taught them the most (Robinson & Werblow, 2012). Fortunately the young men also had uncles, grandfathers, and brothers who contributed to the wealth of family capital, at least for three of them.

Sports and church are valued capitals and provided the males with people in social networks who complemented and built on the skills provided by their families. Churches provided scholarships to help with economic needs to go to college. Participants indicted that the Black church encouraged and stressed education even when they did not hear the encouragement in their schools. These social institutions are invaluable in the eyes of the participants regardless of Bourdieu's theory.

The aspirations of these young men were short term and they only identified the profession they wanted to be in after graduating. Making their mothers and grandmothers proud by graduating was paramount.

Recommendations

Sit down and talk to Black males! Especially talk to those who are succeeding. Those who are genuinely concerned and want to positively impact Black males will initiate conversations and learn from Black males. Those who are concerned will open themselves up to explore how the factors within one's own culture and community mold the way these men move through life and make sense of their lives.

From a research perspective, Harper's (2012b) findings that no one was sitting down and having conversations with successful Black males is disheartening. Realistically, I believe research will only be undertaken by those who have a legitimate interest which is likely to be other Black males. Researchers are usually individuals who have post baccalaureate degrees and there is already a concern because of the low number of Blacks matriculating to, and graduating from, college (Bonner II & Bailey, 2006; Loury, 2004; Lundy-Wagner & Gasman, 2011; Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010).

There are not many more recommendations because this study focused on identifying assets, and the assets were identified through the interviews with the participants. These young men had such positive energy and outlooks on life that it would probably benefit any educator to sit down and talk about their positive journey. Some of the information would be transferable to other males.

Findings Compared to Other Research

The findings compared to other studies were not much different and it was consistently stated that much more research needs to done on Black males and education, especially from an assets-based perspective (Anthony, Kritsonis & Herrington, 2007; Baber, 2014; Bonner & Bailey, 2006; Harper, 2012; Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010; Strayhorn, 2006). Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly (2010) recommended that there needs to be a national focus on the education and social outcomes aimed specifically at Black males:

> There is no specified office within the U.S. Department of Education; no primary federal source to collect and maintain data on Black males; no legislative projects within local, state, or national budgets; no attention on the collection of information on this set of issues outside of a few dedicated organizations; no national policy that would drive resources or attention to the issue; and no federal education program on the educational status of Black males. (p. 2)

Although there are efforts by educators, researchers, policymakers, governmental leaders, faith-based leaders, civil rights leaders, and others intent on improving the quality of life for Black males, the efforts of these people are not usually well coordinated and national coordination is needed to address the complex issues Black males face (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010).

Based on my literature review Dr. Shaun Harper is probably the most cited researcher focusing on assets-based studies of Black males in higher education and most of his studies use the voices of Black males, which sound very similar to the voices of Black males in this study. Assets-based research is expanding, but there is a lot more that

can be but it will be a slow growth if more Black males do not matriculate higher education and move on to post baccalaureate degrees.

Theory

In theory, the complexity of the issues needs to be broken down and taken in sustained segments including, but not limited to: self-accountability; present and historical societal perspectives and realities; educational access and opportunities; economics; health; familial (fatherhood) relationships; criminal justice; and governmental policies and practices. To have these sustained conversations one has to be both committed and seeking first to understand before being understood. Seek first to understand and then to be understood!

In America race is still a difficult conversation to have, but to understand the plethora of issues Black males face *specifically* is even more difficult. In my opinion and experiences, conversations initiated specifically about Black males are often hi-jacked by interjections of, *Well what about Black females*, *What about females in general*, *What about Mexicans or Hispanics*, or *They're just making excuses*. Hi-jacking the conversation deviates from the focus.

If the conversation is specific to Black males, then focus on the Black male perspective. This certainly is not to suggest that there are not issues other sectors of society, but if the intent is to understand and improve the plight of Black male, minimize the desire to interject other discussions and help illustrate and understand life from the Black male perspective.

Practice

The African American Male Dialogue Series was a tool to identify participants when this study began, but as the participants commented on the series it became clear to me that it is much more. Harper's (2012b) belief that the best persons to talk to Black males about being successful are successful Black males strikes me as being correct. This is also a sentiment shared by the participants when they commented on how they not only look up to, but look for, successful Black males. The AAMDS is a model which supports this position.

Who is successful? The participants in the initial Dialogue Series were identified by Black males from the University of the Southwest Coalition of Black Faculty and Staff. The information shared in the initial meeting(s) was that the idea of the AAMDS was to identify influential Black males on campus, have discussions about Black males' successes, concerns, or whatever was of importance to them. After discussions in the Series, the participants are expected to go back into the campus community and have discussions with their own groups and in their own settings.

I am my brother's keeper, was the perspective adopted by the initial group of students as their expectation was that this would begin a cycle of never ending support of Black males by other Black males. The initial group was provided a platform with the help of the entire Coalition of Black Faculty and Staff and has been institutionalized under the Division of Student Affairs.

Whether it is from a community, educational or governmental initiative, conversations from Black males who are respected need to be initiated with other Black males, many of whom have no positive Black male figures in their households. The

conversations need to be deep, thorough, and intrusive, but never hi-jacked.

Policy

Race often gets in the way of policy. From a policy perspective, the focus on one race introduces the potential of discrimination toward or from another race. Respected, bold, and culturally competent individuals are needed to develop and guide policy addressing Black males.

President Obama's *My Brother's Keeper* (White House, 2015) is similar to the concept adopted by the AAMDS. This constitutes a challenge to communities to create cradle to college and career strategies to improve the outcome of *all* youth. There is a component which focuses on addressing opportunity gaps for young men of color and helping them to reach their full potential. Part of the President's strategy is to have conversations with young men of color and understand their perspectives. Politics would get in the way of an initiative directed specifically for Black males, but there is no other group or sector in American history who has suffered as much as Black men, what would be wrong with a national focus on the state of Black males initiated through the federal government?

Like the AAMDS, the grass roots level approach used in President Obama's initiative is a necessity. These types of grass roots initiatives give voice to Black males and information obtained through these young men should inform policy, these young men must be understood first.

What is important is that we take notice of what these males are saying and how they see their world. They know whether or not we are validating their voices or are actually listening to them. These are intelligent men using both book sense and street

sense to navigate multiple settings, environments and people. If they feel as though they are being *played*, manipulated in other words, there is little chance of building a relationship of trust and using information important to them to make policy that impacts them.

Recommendations for Further Research

There was limited research found which effectively conveys how Black males are successfully navigating life from their neighborhood beginnings through higher education. The time period taken to conduct this research intersected with highly publicized events in America where the deaths of young Black males like Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, or the bloody beating of a college student by police have ignited a discussion of whether Black lives matter.

Maybe I am old-school, but I believe education, both formal and informal, is the key. Although specific to schools, consider what W.E. B. Du Bose (Washburn, 1994) said in 1935. It has a much broader context and can help guide further research:

> The Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What he needs is Education. What he must remember is that there is no magic, either in mixed schools or in segregated schools. A mixed school with poor and unsympathetic teachers, with hostile public opinion, and no teaching of truth concerning Black folk, is bad. A segregated school with ignorant placeholders, inadequate equipment, poor salaries, and wretched housing, is equally bad. Other things being equal, the mixed school is the broader, more natural basis for the education of all youth. It gives wider contacts; it inspires greater self-confidence; and suppresses the inferiority complex. But other things seldom are equal, and in

that case, Sympathy, Knowledge, and the Truth, outweigh all that the mixed school

can offer. (p. 1115)

There are a three excerpts, two partial, in DuBois' statement which should be

considered where further research is concerned; 1) Sympathy, Knowledge, and the Truth,

outweigh all...; 2) What he needs is Education; and 3) What he must remember is that

there is no magic...

Sympathy, knowledge and truth are virtues needed to understand the condition or

state of affairs of Black males and are the beginnings of a discussion. I am not as

concerned with sympathy as I am with knowledge and truth. But once knowledge and

truth are obtained, sympathy will likely follow. What better way to gain knowledge about

an individual than by providing the individual with a forum to share their experiences and

realities?

Reading the accounts of participants in this study can provide knowledge and

truth to their experiences and begin a process of understanding. Of course this is not as

extensive as Harper's study (2012b) and there are differences which are will be impacted

by Black males from different geographic locations, social and/or economic class,

education, family structures, etc. But more research should be conducted where other

Black males provide the primary sources of data.

Education is a necessity. Not only should Black males be familiar with, and

educated about, issues impacting Black males, but Black males themselves need to be

educated about, and familiar with, what impacts them. Casual conversations are just as

valuable as structured conversations. Black males who are in positions of influence and

authority must make time to have conversations which educate other Black males about

issues impacting Black males. No matter how difficult or frustrating, similar conversations must extend to non-Black males, especially educators and policymakers who can influence policy and perspectives.

Finally, there are no magical potions, solutions, or simple answers which determine what is universally best for more research on Black males. Their issues are complex, yet simple. Black males from upper and middle social and economic classes endure many of the same experiences as those in lower social and economic classes. Black professors entering their own homes are just as likely to be arrested as homeless Blacks in New York City. Race makes the research and conversations complex but equality and fairness should make it simple. Merging the two has not been successful for Black males for over two hundred years.

APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A

IRB CERTIFICATE

TEXAS ★ STATE
UNIVERSITY
SAN MARCOS
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Institutional Review Board Application

Certificate of Approval

Applicant: Vincent Morton

Application Number : 2013Z4890

Project Title: Dissertation "African American Males: Perceived Benefits of a College Education Pre and Post College Matriculation"

Date of Approval: 09/06/13 09:36:15

Expiration Date: 09/06/14

_____
Assistant Vice President for Research and Federal Relations

_____
Chair, Institutional Review Board

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

Aspirational

1. What is it that you want to be and who were the people who supported your dreams and goals?
2. Were there times when you questioned whether or not you could reach your goals or dreams?
3. What and/or who most:
   a. Positively impacted your belief that you could successfully accomplish your educational goals?
   b. Negatively impacted your belief that you could successfully accomplish your educational goals?

Linguistics

1. How would you assess your ability to communicate?
2. Were there communications styles you had to learn or adapt to?
3. Do you consider the way that you speak or communicate ever being an issue or concern inside or outside of your community?
3. How many languages do you speak?
4. Do you consider the communication skills you developed being an asset in adapting to different communities/settings/institutions/people? Describe.

Familial

Immediate Family
1. Describe your immediate family.
2. Describe your parents' expectations about higher education for you.
3. Who had the greatest impact/influence on you and why?
4. What was the highest level of education attained by your mother; father; siblings and anyone else who lived in the same household?
5. Describe what characteristics were instilled in you that helped you get to where you are today.

Extended Family
1. Who were the extended family members or family friends that you were the closest to and why?
2. Who were the extended family members or friends who you respected the most and why?
3. Describe the extended family members who most significantly impacted your views of a college education.
4. What were the most significant assets provided to you by extended family members?

Community
1. Describe the racial make-up of the neighborhood(s) where you grew up?

2. How would you describe the socio-economic status of the neighborhood(s) where you grew up?
3. Who were the most influential or respected people in your community?
4. What information, resources and/or assets did they share with you?
5. What community people and/or experiences best prepared you for college?

Social

1. Describe any groups or networks (school, church, sports) of people who positively impacted your educational goals.
2. What community resources provided you benefits to help attain your educational goals?
3. Describe any social skills you developed from within your community that you consider to be beneficial in your efforts to obtain your educational goals.
4. Describe any social skills you had to learn or adapt to, that were different than what you were accustomed to?

Navigational

1. What has been your most challenging institutions to navigate? Describe.
2. What skills do you believe you developed from within your community that helped you get through places that you were not accustomed to?
3. Considering students, teachers, coaches, counselors, and administrators how would you describe the schools you attended?
4. Describe the types of neighborhoods you grew up in.
5. What school related events, people or network impacted your views of a college education?

Resistance

1. What challenges did you have to address or overcome to matriculate college?
2. Who or what helped you overcome the challenges?
3. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges Black males, who want a college degree, face and what would you recommend they do to overcome those challenges?

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