Getting It Right: African American Male College/University Presidents and Their Early Cultivation of Self-Efficacy

JAMES RANDALL

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GETTING IT RIGHT: AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS AND THEIR EARLY CULTIVATION OF SELF-EFFICACY

A Dissertation Presented

By

JAMES ANTHONY RANDALL

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2017

College of Education
Higher Education Policy & Leadership Studies
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife, Qualahnia, and my three amazing children, Royce, Jordyn, and Journee, whose love, support, and pride have pushed me well beyond what I believed were my limits and who inspire me every day.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am extremely thankful to all of the people who have supported this project from the beginning, and I am so proud of the standards, high expectations and quality of education I received while at the University of Massachusetts. I sincerely thank the presidents who participated in this study and in the pilot studies. Their insights, truths, and willingness to share the unique details of their lives provided me with some of the richest and most valuable lessons of my life.

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To my wife Qualahnia, my son Royce and my daughters Jordyn and Journee - I love you with everything that I am and want you to know that you are my motivation, my inspiration and my nirvana...Thank you!

Lastly, I want to give a special thank you to my family at the University of Maryland who continuously reached out, checked-in, shared resources,
and provided advise and unwavering encouragement. It meant more to me than you will ever know...THANK YOU!
ABSTRACT

GETTING IT RIGHT: AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS AND THEIR EARLY CULTIVATION OF SELF-EFFICACY

MAY 2017

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Education remains the single most important means by which individuals in the United States can empower themselves economically, socially, and personally. In spite of this, a significant percentage of young African American males do not even appear to be competing or reaching for the educational opportunities before them as they rank the poorest amongst their peers in a myriad of academic indicators. Despite the significant body of research describing the various barriers to African American males’ academic achievement, there remains little research seeking to understand why numerous African American males do achieve academically and professionally despite facing many of the same ecological factors as their peers.

This study seeks to provide new knowledge about how and why African American males achieve, by focusing on eleven highly successful and efficacious African American male college/university presidents. It examines a) the formation of each president’s educational identity and beliefs, as well as b) the development of their sense of agency and resilience, and c) how, despite their individual hurdles, they were able to thrive – all essential elements of self-efficacy. By examining each
president’s responses through a self-efficacy framework, this work hopes to reveal new themes about race and gender, African American males in particular, and to discover instrumental elements that can lead to academic success in the classroom for a new generation of young, African-American males.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“...they are able who think they are able.”
-Virgil (Roman Poet)

Within the United States education is the single most important means by which individuals empower themselves economically, socially, and personally (Mello, 2002; Irving & Hudley, 2008). To be educated in the United States from kindergarten through high school is every child’s inalienable Constitutional right. However, this has not always been the case for all segments of the United States’ population as many groups and individuals have been marginalized and faced inequitable barriers to educational opportunity. Each of these group’s story is tragic, yet few groups have experienced the prolonged and pervasive marginalization experienced by African Americans. Law prohibited African Americans who were initially brought to this country as slaves in 1619 for over 200 years from learning to read and write. Once African Americans were freed from slavery in 1863 with the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, they were declared free from the bondages of slavery, but were then systematically discriminated against socially, economically, politically, and educationally at the hands of the dominant and racist White majority (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990). The multi-tiered discrimination of African Americans continued for the next 100 years as they painstakingly fought for legal protection against all forms of discrimination and segregation. It was not until 1954 with the landmark
ruling of Oliver Brown, et al v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas et al that African Americans were legally granted equal access to the United States educational system (Ogletree, 2004) and not until 1964 with the signing of the Civil Rights Act, that federal legislation was enacted formally protecting African Americans against all major forms of discrimination and segregation (United States Justice Department, 2011). Then, in 1965, the United States government passed the Voters Rights Act, which made it illegal for any state to engage in discriminatory voting practices (United States Department of Justice, 2011). The signing into law of the Voters Rights Act marked the final legislative battle for African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement. While the 1965 signing by President Lyndon B Johnson denoted the beginning of the first period in U.S. history where there were no federal legislative barriers preventing African Americans from attaining social and economic advancement, the federal laws were unable to protect African American from the crippling effects of overt and covert racism that pervaded American culture at that time.

Understanding African Americans’ history in the United States and how long they fought for equal citizenship, it would have been reasonable to assume that once all federal legislative barriers had been removed that African Americans would have begun to flourish. It, also, would have been reasonable to assume that African Americans would have made considerable and consistent strides academically in all significant educational measures since acquiring all of their Constitutional rights. While these assumptions
have largely held true for African American women, African American men have experienced a very different reality.

In a country where education is so highly regarded, President Barack Obama (2011) stated:

A world-class education is the single most important factor in determining not just whether our kids can compete for the best jobs but whether America can out-compete countries around the world. America's business leaders understand that when it comes to education, we need to up our game. That's why we're working together to put an outstanding education within reach for every child.

In spite of this, a significant proportion of African American males do not even appear to be competing or reaching for the educational opportunity before them as they rank the poorest amongst their peers in a myriad of academic indicators.

This chapter discusses the ongoing academic struggles of young African American males. The argument is also made that because educational disparities of African American males are the focal point of this research, the most appropriate group to study would be African American men who are the most accomplished academically and professionally in the field of education-the African American male college/university president.

More specifically, this chapter illuminates the historical barriers African Americans have had to overcome in order to gain full and equal access to all of America’s institutions, including educational ones. In addition, this chapter provides a synopsis of the extremely poor statistics associated with African American male school performance. Lastly, chapter one presents an
overview of the motivation behind this research, while also discussing specifically why African American male college/university presidents were chosen as the subjects for this study, and what can be learned by studying their lives through the perspective of self-efficacy. Chapter one is divided into the following sections: problem statement, significance, assumptions, definition of terms, and organization of the document.

**Statement of the Problem**

Statistically speaking, the educational performance of young African American males is grim. African American males are more likely than any other racial, ethnic or gender group to drop out of school; be suspended or expelled; have low GPAs; have low standardized test scores; and be referred or placed in special education classes (Irving & Hudley, 2008; Whiting, 2006). In addition, young African American males are disproportionately underrepresented in advanced placement and honors courses (Young, 2007; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990), have a national high school graduation rate of only 47 percent as compared to 76 percent for White males (Jackson, 2010), and, according to the American Council on Education in 2007 (ACE), only 27.8 percent of eligible African American males were enrolled in college as compared to 41.6 percent for White males (Ryu, 2009).

The staggering inequities demonstrated by these statistics have significant long-term implications for young African American males, their families, their communities, and the larger society. The White House (2012), in their pursuit for education reform in the United States, recognized that
“Providing a high-quality education for all children is critical to America’s economic future”. Graduating from high school in the U.S. is so important because research shows that those who fail to graduate from high school face increased levels of unemployment, are subject to significantly lower wages (The Center for Public Education, n.d.; Jackson, 2010), and have higher poverty rates (American Psychological Association, n.d.). For those who do obtain low-skilled employment research shows that by age 25 they can only expect to earn an average of $19,405 a year (Hull, 2011), which is only $8,415 over the national poverty level for a single person U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). Statistics also show that nearly half of the heads of households on welfare are high school dropouts (Schwartz, 1995).

Lochner and Moretti (2003) and Spencer (2011) have found a direct relationship between one’s education level and involvement with crime. Those who fail to graduate from high school can expect to be the victims of higher crime rates (Maguin & Loeber, 1996), and experience increased incarceration rates as perpetrators (Weissman et al, 2005). Currently, high school dropouts make up nearly half of the United State’s prison population (Schwartz, 1995).

What does this mean for African American men? Ferber (2007) states that one third of all Black men between the ages of 18 to 39 can expect to be jailed, paroled, or put on probation at some point in their lives. Even more startling is the fact that as of 2000, for the first time in the United States’
history, there were more African American men in prison (791,600) than enrolled in college (603,032) (BBC, 2002). Not apparent in these statistics are untold stories of the deferred hopes, dreams and aspirations of hundreds of thousands of young African American males, most of whom at one time were optimistic and encouraged about what they could become. Failing to graduate from high school does not determine one’s destiny, and some high school dropouts go on to be very successful. However, failing to complete high school does guarantee that a student will be more likely than their peers who graduate to be unemployed, live in poverty, receive public assistance, be imprisoned, put on death row, be in poor health, divorce, and be a single parent with children who also dropout of high school (Bridgeland, Dilulio & Morison, 2006).

**Significance**

The current academic challenges of African American males are evident, but what is even more troubling is that these issues have persisted despite the fact that researchers have been studying the school failures of young African Americans males since the 1930’s (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990). While there have been numerous theories presented explaining the causes of African American male school failure, much of the literature is associated with four specific theoretical perspectives: genetic based, cultural based, low teacher expectations, and student oppositional identity (Wiggan, 2007). Yet the results of many of these prior studies have been mixed and contradictory, as evidenced by the research of Irving & Hudley (2008) and Hernstein &
Murray (1994). Perspectives that focus on genetic differences between races are deterministic, while the perspectives that focus on institutional racism, low-teacher expectations, and oppositional attitudes fail to account for the individual agency of the African American students (Wiggan, 2007). Despite the significant body of existing research describing the various barriers to African American males’ academic achievement, there remains very little research seeking to understand why many African American males achieve academically despite facing many if not all of the same ecological factors that have led so many others to fail. This study begins to forge that divide by focusing on a group of highly successful, efficacious African American men who have achieved both academically and professionally.

African American male college/university presidents are uniquely accomplished in the field of education. All have been successful at every level of education, with the vast majority earning their doctorate degrees. In addition, they have achieved at the highest level in the field of education (Birnbaum, 2001), and their professional experiences provide them intimate knowledge and understanding of the United States educational system at a range of levels. This study seeks to uncover the formation of each president’s educational identity and beliefs, as well as the development of their sense of agency and resilience, and how, time and time again, despite their individual hurdles, they were able to thrive—all essential elements of self-efficacy. By examining each president’s responses through a self-efficacy framework, there is the potential to reveal new themes about race, gender,
and males in particular, as well as discover instrumental elements that can lead to academic success in the classroom for a new generation of young African-American males.

**Assumptions**

This study assumes the following regarding the African American male college/university presidents who will participate in this study:

- They will have had childhoods that were representative of their peers;
- They will have come from modest economic backgrounds;
- Their early academic achievements would have been relatively similar to their classmates;
- Their early life ambitions would have been relatively normal for a young person;
- There will be patterns amongst each African American male college/university president regarding their early cultivation of self-efficacy;
- Each African American male college/university president will share elements of what John Ogbu (2004) referred to as a collective identity;
- Each African American male college/university president would have had to struggle with and overcome behaviors associated with what Ogbu (2004) called Oppositional Collective Identity; and
- Each African American male college/university president will have clear examples of efficacious behaviors that they would have displayed throughout their academic and professional lives that are documentable.
Definition of Key Terms

“Acting White”: Is characterized as those of African American descent that speak standard English, spend a lot of time in the library studying, work hard to get good grades in school, get good grades in school, and are punctual (Fordham & Ogbo, 1986).

Agency: A person or thing through which power is exerted or an end is achieved (Merriam-Webster, 2012).

Collective identity: provides group members with the sense of “who they are” or “peoplehood” (Ogbo, 2004).

College/university presidents: Are defined as: active presidents, retired presidents that served in that role for a minimum of three years, and aspiring presidents currently serving as a senior level administrator such as Dean, Vice President or Provost.

Cultural-ecology theory: “This theory considers the broad societal and school factors as well as the dynamics within the minority communities. Ecology is the "setting," "environment," or "world" of people (minorities), and "cultural" broadly refers to the way people (in this case the minorities) see their world and behave in it (Ogbo & Simons, 1998, p.158)” Cultural-ecology theory has two parts: “One part is about the way the minorities are treated or mistreated in education in terms of educational policies, pedagogy, and returns for their investment or school credentials. The second part is about the way the minorities perceive and respond to schooling as a consequence of their treatment (Ogbo & Simons, 1998, p.158)”.
**Involuntary minority:** are people who have been conquered, colonized, or enslaved. Unlike immigrant minorities, the non-immigrants have been made to be a part of the U.S. society against their will (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p.165).

**Oppositional collective identity:** Is a part of African American culture and leads them to develop oppositional attitudes towards White mainstream society which makes them reluctant to cross cultural boundaries and adopt what they consider to be "White ways" of talking, thinking, and behaving because they fear doing so will displace their own minority identity and alienate them from their peers, family, and community (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

**Self-efficacy:** “The belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations (Bandura, 1995, p. 2).

**Voluntary minority** – “...those who have more or less willingly moved to the United States because they expect better opportunities (better jobs, more political or religious freedom) than they had in their homelands or places of origin (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p.164)”.

**Organization of the Document**

The final document includes five chapters. Chapter 2 consists of the review of literature and includes the following: Historical Foundation of Cultural-Ecological Theory; Cultural-Ecology Theory; The Influence of Minority Status; Collective Identity Formation; Oppositional Collective
Identity; African American Male College/University Presidents; The African American Male President & Their Stories of Achievement; Representative Bureaucracy; Career Paths; Barriers to Achievement; Self-Efficacy; Efficacy Applied; Self-Efficacy Acquisition; Efficacy Cultivated; Efficacious African American Males; and Learning From Their Legacies. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and includes an introduction followed by research design, research questions, participants, data collection and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the presidents’ profiles; Central Champion Model; Preparation for Championing; Eight Outcomes; and the Five Efficacy Developing Themes. Chapter 5 consists of Discussion and Summary; The results and the Connection to Existing Knowledge; a Revisit to the Research Questions; Implications of the Central Champion Model; Implications for Future Research; and a Summary of the Research.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Young African American males are more likely than their peers, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender, to drop out of school, be suspended or expelled, have low GPAs and low standardized test scores, and be referred or placed in special education classes (Irving & Hudley, 2008; Whiting, 2006). Compounding these statistics, young African American males are also disproportionately underrepresented in advance placement and honors courses (Young, 2007; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990), have a national high school graduation rate of only 47 percent (Jackson, 2010), and, according to the American Council on Education (ACE), only 27.8 percent of college eligible African American males enrolled in college as of 2007 (Ryu, 2009). These sobering statistics represent how poorly, as a collective, young African American males are performing academically nationally, and are linked to several long-term negative social implications such as increased unemployment and low wages (The Center for Public Education, n.d.; Jackson), higher crime rates (Maguin & Loeber, 1996), increased incarceration rates (Weissman et al, 2005), and higher poverty rates (American Psychological Association, n.d.). While education remains the primary vehicle people utilize to become empowered economically, socially, and personally (Mello, 2002; Irving & Hudley, 2008), there is a significant portion of young African American males that are failing to seize the
educational opportunities provided. High levels of dropouts, expulsions, and low college attendance diminish the pool of qualified African American males entering the professional ranks, and, even more significantly, represent the lost hopes and dreams of a significant percentage of the current generation of young African American males. It was for these reasons that, for much of the 20th century, African Americans painstakingly fought for their right to receive a fair and equal education (Brown vs. the Board of Education) under the protection of federal law (Ogletree, 2004). Generations of African American leaders believed, without questioning, that education was a social requirement for racial uplift and social mobility, and for generations have been advocating the importance of education. Each quote referenced below demonstrates how critical African American leaders have viewed education throughout history (African American Quotes, 2007):

"Education, the sheet anchor to a society where liberty and justice are secure, is a dangerous thing to society in the presence of injustices and oppressions...."

-Frederick Douglass

"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."

-Malcolm X

"When bright young minds can't afford college, America pays the price."

-Roy Wilkins

"Without education, you are not going anywhere in this world."

-Arthur Ashe

For years, researchers have sought to explain the poor academic performance of young African American males, putting forth numerous
theories that have all progressed and enriched the discussion in their own and unique ways. There are some researchers that explain African American males as victims of a racist and oppressive culture (Irving & Hudley, 2008) that is systemically stacked against them, while others such as Hernstein & Murray (1994) have argued that there is a genetically based hierarchy of intelligence amongst humans and the poor academic achievements of African American males is evidence of that fact. Other researchers focus their attention on the influence that teachers’ expectations have on student learning, making the argument that the poor academic performance of African American males can be directly associated with low-teacher expectations (Casteel, 2000). One of the most prominent explanations established has been Ogbu’s (1978) idea that African American males have developed an oppositional identity in association with school performance that leads them to disassociate with typical pro-school behaviors. Much of the large body of research in this area has sought to only explain the educational failures of young African American males. This deficit approach to viewing and understanding African American male school performance is limiting at its very best, and ultimately has failed to produce any visible change in the educational outcomes of young African American males. Perspectives that focus on genetic differences between races are deterministic and defy remedy, while other perspectives that focus on institutional racism, low-teacher expectations, and oppositional attitudes all fail to account for the individual agency of African American students
Regardless of one’s perspective, what is undeniable is that a substantial number of young African American males are either failing academically or are not performing up to their capabilities in the classroom at the level of other ethnic-gender categories.

At present, we are inundated with research that has focused on the academic challenges of African American males, and has conversely neglected to explore the academic achievements of many successful African American males and the factors that enabled them to overcome the momentous obstacles and barriers that they inevitably faced throughout their lives (Spencer et al., 2003). It is this information gap that this study seeks to fill. Throughout America’s history there have been significant numbers of African American men that have beaten the odds to succeed academically and professionally, but the focus of this study is on the educational disparities experienced by African American males. Therefore, it seems appropriate to focus on the cohort of African American male college/university president, who represent a specific group of African American males that have achieved academically and have risen to the top in the field of higher education.

The African American male college/university president is a statistical oddity. Of the 4,352 colleges and universities throughout the United States, only 152 (3%) are led by African American males (ACE, 2007), despite making up over 6 percent of the U.S. population. To ascend to the position of college or university president the academic preparation is extensive and
laborious. African American male college/university presidents are uniquely successful in the field of education, and through their personal and professional experiences have intimate knowledge and understanding of the United States educational system at most levels. This study will seek to uncover the formation of each president’s educational identity and beliefs, the development of their sense of agency and resilience, and how, time and time again, despite their individual hurdles, they were able to thrive. By examining each president’s responses through this framework there is the potential to reveal new perspectives about race, gender, and males, in relation to educational achievement. Ultimately this study hopes to obtain a better understanding of the ecological forces with which highly efficacious African American men not just contend with, but surmount.

In order to provide a comprehensive picture of the theoretical framework used to explore the successful career development of African American college/university presidents the literature review will be divided into three sections. The first section of the literature review is committed to exploring the lasting affects of slavery and African Americans’ ongoing struggle for equality in America, and how those events have shaped each president’s collective identity and disposition toward educational achievement. Cultural-ecological theory and the accompanying body of literature will be used as the lens to explore the historical, structural and cultural forces that have been the most Influential on African Americans, and how these forces contribute to the variability in minority performance when
compared by race and gender. By first understanding the forces that have shaped African American’s collective identity, it is the intent of this literature review to then explore the specific academic struggles of young African American males.

The second section of the literature review will explore the African American male college/university presidents and the challenges associated with attaining such positions. Each African American male that has become a college/university president has been confronted with significant adversity and barriers that have prevented or discouraged a great many from ascending through the academic ranks. Regardless, there are a number of African American men who have faced those tests and prevailed over all obstacles in their pathway to the presidency. This section of the literature review will also explore the extensive work that exists on the various career paths that both men and women take to the college presidency.

The final section of the literature review will delve into the concept of self-efficacy and how it can be used to understand what motivates achievement academically and professionally within individuals. Albert Bandura (1995) defines self-efficacy as “the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (p. 2). Self-efficacy is the unwavering belief that some men and women have in their own abilities, which in turn focuses their desire to succeed. It is the concept that an individual’s thoughts and feelings about his or her own abilities, directly affect how they then exercise control over the
events that influence their life. In addition, this section will explore academic and career efficacy and the relationship that exists between the two. This research will explore the early development of self-efficacy within African American male college/university presidents and how self-efficacy influenced their achievement ideology, their aspirations, and their expectations for themselves both academically and professionally.

**Historical Foundation of Cultural-Ecological Theory**

In 1619 the first Africans were brought to the United States as slaves. What began in Jamestown, Va. with the arrival of one ship carrying the cargo of 20 enslaved Africans rapidly expanded throughout southern states as the cotton industry exploded, eventually increasing the slave population within the United States to nearly 4 million by 1860 (Slavery and the making of America, n.d.). Throughout this time slaveholding states adopted slave codes and laws which defined slaves as chattel property-human beings with no human rights recognized by law (Davis, n.d). For well over 200 years enslaved African Americans were tightly controlled; told how to speak and how to behave, while they were also denied by law the liberty of learning how to read and write (Ogbu, 2004). Punishment for an offense committed by an individual slave was often extended to all of the slaves throughout that plantation. This becomes an important element in understanding the development of the collective Black identity, which will be discussed later.

On January 1, 1863, president Abraham Lincoln changed the course of the country with the landmark signing of the Emancipation Proclamation,
formally ending slavery in all states not loyal to the Union, and officially setting free 3.1 million of the country’s 4 million slaves (National Archives & Records Administration, 2011). While the Emancipation Proclamation served as a pivotal moment in the United States’ history, formally establishing legislation at the federal level that would in time completely abolish slavery in the United States, the Emancipation Proclamation did not guarantee fair treatment of the country’s now freed slaves. Nor was the proclamation able to ensure that those newly freed slaves would be provided the same opportunity as their former oppressors, to have access to the means, which would foster social and economic advancement (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990).

The next 148 years post-Emancipation for African Americans has been defined by their continuous fight and struggle in the pursuit of fair and just treatment socially, economically, politically, and educationally. While African Americans have experienced significant progress in their fight for economic justice, they have also had significant and pervasive problems in all facets of their lives in America. Whether it is high levels of unemployment, underemployment, crime, poverty, or inadequate education, the African American community has had to contend with persistent discrimination and systematic exclusion from mainstream U.S. society by dominant White group members (Harris, 1995; Ogbu & Wilson, 1990). Despite the fact that the African American community has been beset by numerous struggles, the
most relevant matter to this literature review has been the extremely high level of school failures of today's young African American males.

Nevertheless, the school failures of African American males are not a new phenomenon. In fact, the school failures of African American males have been studied and documented as early as the 1930's (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990). Much of the popular literature has found itself associated with four specific theoretical perspectives: genetic based, cultural based, low teacher expectations, and student oppositional identity (Wiggan, 2007). In recent years, however, Ogbu’s student oppositional identity, in association with his cultural-ecology theory, has established itself as one of the most dominant theoretical frameworks developed to explain the Black-White achievement gap (Carter, 2006; Warikoo & Carter, 2009).

**Cultural-Ecology Theory**

Ogbu first introduced cultural-ecology theory in 1978. Since its establishment, there has been a substantial amount of supportive work published (Ford & Harris, 1996; McWhorter, 2001; Farkas, Lleras, and Maczuga, 2002; O’Connor, Lewis, & Mueller, 2007) creating a broad and well-researched base for the theory. One such study published by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) is entitled *Black Students’ School Success: Coping with the “Burden of ‘Acting White’”*. Since its publication over 20 years ago, it has remained one the most popular and influential studies ever put forth explaining the academic under achievement of African Americans and the Black-White achievement gap through the cultural-ecological perspective
(Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005). The cultural-ecological theory utilizes the historical, structural and cultural forces experienced by minority groups to explain the varying school performance of such groups, including African Americans.

The theoretical framework utilized by Fordham and Ogbu was based on work previously completed by Ogbu (1983) where he established three basic premises of the cultural-ecological perspective. First, no minority group is genetically intellectually superior to any other minority group; second, no minority group is better at educating their children; and lastly, there is not one particular language that better prepares children for school in the United States. In his early work Ogbu made the case that to understand why there is variation in how minority groups perform academically within the U.S. school system, one must first understand how and why each minority group was integrated into the United States. Secondly, Ogbu makes the case that one must not just understand what mistreatment has been experienced by each minority group at the hands of dominant White group members, but one must also understand how each minority group has responded to that treatment, and how the combination of the two can shape a group’s perception of school and its relevance to their lives. The behaviors and characteristics associated with each minority group in regards to school performance through the cultural-ecological perspective cannot simply be extrapolated to all members of a particular group. Instead, Ogbu (1998) states that the behaviors and characteristics associated with
each minority group in relationship to school performance exist within
enough members of each group that visible patterns amongst group
members can be observed.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) hypothesize that a significant reason for
school failure on the part of African Americans is the fact that they, as a
group, have experienced not just an “inordinate level of ambivalence” toward
the educational system, but also have experienced “affective dissonance”
towards academic achievement and success. The authors state that the poor
school performance of African American children is the result of three
factors:

...first, White people provide them with inferior schooling and treat
them differently in school; second, by imposing a job ceiling, White
people fail to reward them adequately for their educational
accomplishments in adult life; and third, Black Americans develop
coping devices which, in turn, further limit their striving for academic
success (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, 179).

The compounding consequence of these three factors has resulted in many
able African American students to not put forth the needed effort, nor display
the necessary perseverance to be successful academically, and consequently
they have either failed academically or have performed well below their
capabilities (Ogbu, 2004).

**The Influence of Minority Status**

What is compelling about Ogbu’s cultural-ecological theory is that the
plight of African Americans within the United States can also be seen globally
amongst other minority groups that have similar minority status in their
countries. In 1978, Ogbu published a major comparative work in which he
examined the treatment of minority groups in six countries: Britain, India, Israel, Japan, New Zealand and the United States. Within each country he was able to identify a minority group that had assumed a *castelike* minority status. Ogbu (1978) classified each group *castelike* as a result of their subordinate status within their country's stratified systems, which he observed to be more rigid than what is generally associated with social class stratification. In each case, the *castelike* minority groups had been “historically denied equal educational opportunities in terms of access to educational resources, treatment in school, and the rewards in employment and wages for educational accomplishments (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p.157).” Based on these findings Ogbu then concluded that the poor academic achievement of not just African Americans but also other *castelike* minority groups was an adaptive technique utilized to adjust to perceived structural barriers.

It is important to note that cultural-ecology theory is not based on race, but rather it seeks to provide a framework that can be used to explain the beliefs and behaviors of not just *castelike* minority groups, but all minority groups within a given culture particularly in relation to school success and failure (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Within the cultural-ecological perspective all minorities are divided into two groups: having voluntary or involuntary minority status. Each group, whether they are voluntary or involuntary share a collective identity, providing its members with the sense of “who they are” or “peoplehood” (Ogbu, 2004). A minority group’s status
will influence virtually every aspect of that group’s culture beginning with their frame of reference, to their folk theories of “making it” (and role models), to the degree of trust the group has for the dominant culture and their institutions, and lastly, to how they interpret the effect that adopting mainstream ways will influence their minority identity (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

**Voluntary minority status**

Voluntary minorities are those that have come to the United States by choice, primarily for a “better life”, and understand that they were not forced to be here. Minorities who fall within the voluntary status believe the United States will provide them and their families more opportunities for success than what would have been available to them in their homelands (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Fordham & Ogbu (1986) state that voluntary minorities generally come to the United States with what they describes as a “tourist” attitude towards learning the country’s culture and language. They are firmly centered in their own cultures and have the choice to observe or adopt any aspect of the United State’s culture that they please. Hence, voluntary minorities have no qualms about learning the county’s language, customs, and rules, all of which are seen as essential to their success as a group in the U.S. by group members. Their tourist attitude then enables them to be more willing to accommodate and accept disparities in their treatment because they do not believe what they learn while in the U.S. will threaten their group
identity and they recognize that they are here to improve their family’s economic fortune.

A voluntary minority group member’s outlook toward school is influenced by their ability to always make a “back home” reference, allowing them to find solace in the knowledge that what they are experiencing now is better than what would have been available to them in their native land. Voluntary minorities fundamentally believe educational achievement is the primary strategy to “making it” within the United States. As a collective they buy into all of the specific behaviors which are required for educational achievement such as hard work, mastering the school curriculum, learning to speak and write standard English, obeying rules, exhibiting “good school” behavior, and getting good grades (Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Fordham, 2004). Some examples of groups that fall into voluntary minority status are immigrants from Africa, Central America, China, Cuba, India, Japan, Mexico, and South America.

**Involuntary minority status**

Involuntary minorities are represented by those groups that have been conquered, colonized, or enslaved and have been forced against their will to be integrated into America (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Examples of involuntary minority groups are: African Americans who are the descendants of those brought here as slaves, Native Americans that were conquered, Alaska Natives that were conquered, Hawaiians that were colonized, Mexican Americans in the Southwest who were conquered, and Puerto Ricans who
were colonized. Together, through the cultural-ecological perspective, they share a collective identity that is marked by their shared internalization of their distinct histories with dominant White group members. Collectively they see their presence within the United States as forced upon them by White people. Since their arrival these groups believe that their individual food choices, clothing, music, values, behaviors and languages have never been respected and, in fact, believe that their cultures have been denoted as inferior to the dominant White culture. Within the United States, mainstream cultural values are communicated through the images expressed in television programming, books, magazines, and school textbooks, all of which have been shown through research to reinforce dominant White culture and diminish the accomplishments of minority groups (Ferber, 2007; Tatum, 1992). While the lack of positive images of involuntary minority groups has been detrimental, research has shown that specifically the lack of positive images for African American youth has led them to feel that they will never have the option of full membership into the dominant White society (Irving & Hudley, 2008; Ogbu, 2004).

Unlike voluntary minorities, involuntary minorities do not have a “tourist attitude” towards learning the culture and language of White Americans (Ogbu & Simons, 1998), and are in fact bitter about being forced into their minority status (Ogbu, 2004). Involuntary minorities for generations have experienced racism, pervasive discrimination and systematic exclusion socially, economically, politically, and educationally at
the hands of the dominant White culture. Stories of the atrocities experienced by involuntary minorities at the hands of White people have been passed down from generation to generation, reinforcing and strengthening their collective identity (Ogbu, 2004). As a result of their history with the dominant White culture, involuntary minorities have developed what Ogbu (2004) called “ambivalent folk theories” of what it takes to “make it”. It is here that elements of what Ogbu describes as an oppositional identity begins to surface. Ogbu & Simons (1998) theorize involuntary minorities understand the distinctions that exist between them and mainstream society in regards to their culture and language, and hence believe that those differences are actually symbolic of their collective identity and must be preserved and maintained by group members.

**Collective Identity Formation**

Researchers have found that involuntary minorities treat their school systems with suspicion, believing their children will not receive an education equal to that of White children (Fordham, 1985; Ogbu & Simmons, 1998; Ogbu, 2004). Ogbu & Simons (1998), Fordham (1985), Irving & Hudley (2008) and McWhorter (2003) all found that involuntary minorities believe hard work and education are important to their futures, but also assert that involuntary minorities conversely believe they cannot overcome the institutional racism that is stacked against them. Hence, pro-school behaviors such as hard work, mastering the school curriculum, learning to speak and write standard English, obeying rules, exhibiting “good school”
behavior, and getting good grades are resisted by involuntary minorities (Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Fordham, 2004, Irving & Hudley, 2008). If any of the aforementioned pro-school related behaviors, which are all required for educational achievement, are adopted by a member of an involuntary minority group, studies have shown that those students will be labeled as “acting White” and their group identity will be diminished (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Consequently, as previously mentioned, researchers have found that as a result of their collective identity, involuntary minority students develop an “inordinate ambivalence” and “affective dissonance” towards their education and they accordingly fail or under perform in school (Young, 2007; Fordham, 1985; Ogbu & Fordham, 1986; Ogbu, 2004).

**Understanding African American Collective Identity**

African Americans’ collective identity refers to their shared sense of who they are. This identity provides members with the sense of belonging, and their sense of togetherness that is reflected in the group’s shared attitudes, beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and language (Ogbu, 2004). African Americans’ collective identity transcends the boundaries of location and social class (Ogbu, 1981; Carter, 2003). As previously mentioned, collective identity is developed and cultivated through two means, ecological forces and the group response to those forces. Ecological forces or status problems are defined as forces outside of the group that differentiate groups from each other, providing members of a group a unique shared experience. For African Americans, their collective identity was developed during slavery,
and strengthened post-Emancipation through their ongoing collective struggle for equal and just treatment socially, educationally, economically, and politically.

The social transition from slavery to freedom for African Americans was plagued by numerous challenges. Within popular media, the press, and literature, African Americans were demonized, belittled and portrayed as an inferior race (Ogbu, 2004). Initially, African American males were portrayed as accommodating slaves, rebellious slaves, clowns, sambos, coons, and tricksters (Ogbu, 2004). Throughout western folklore African American males were depicted as untamed and delinquent. These images have remained, but transformed into new forms and new characters such as the athlete, thug, gangster, rapper, or “player”. Presently, researchers such as Ferber (2007) have found that African Americans males are depicted in popular media as having an “animal-like nature”; their sexuality is emphasized, and they are often seen as physically aggressive and violent (Ferber, 2007); while Dennis (2009) found that young African Americans males are often depicted as “…soft, passive and malleable, who are ineffectual, who are humorous sidekicks but never leaders; never powerful, never destined for futures as politicians or professors of economics; never beautiful, never objects of desire (p.191)”. Both sets of images are oppressive and damaging to African American children by telling them they are inferior to their White counterparts (Ogbu, 1981).
In addition, African Americans have been residentially segregated, often in unequal and substandard housing through various discriminatory practices. Drugs, violence, and crime characterize these communities, as has the poor quality of schools. Discriminatory educational policies and practices at the federal and state level towards African Americans have been in place since they first arrived in America. Initially, as slaves, African Americans were forbidden from being educated. Over time these practices evolved into new methods of disenfranchisement, such as legalized school segregation and tracking designed to ensure that African American students received a separate and unequal education. Compounding the challenges for African American students is the fact that the vast majority of their schools, as compared to White schools, receive significantly less funding and resources, and are traditionally understaffed with the least qualified teachers (Ogbu, 2004). Clark (1965) stated that he believed the public schools in America’s urban ghettos reflected the oppressive culture of racial exclusion, and that the inferior education such students in those schools received, only prepared them to be second-class citizens within the United States.

The economic disenfranchisement of African Americans began during slavery and has continued to the present day. Ogbu (2004) argued that African Americans have been excluded from free and fair competition within mainstream society with regard to employment, wages, reaching the “job-ceiling”, and entrepreneurship. Within the United States’ economic system, jobs are the most important component of status mobility. Yet, through the
regular use of a “job-ceiling”, African American men were denied their representative number of high status jobs and, in turn, have been relegated overwhelmingly to menial level jobs (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990).

It was not until the Civil Rights Act of 1964, over 100 years after being made free by the Emancipation Proclamation, that legislation was enacted at the federal level to formally protect African Americans against all major forms of discrimination and segregation. The Civil Rights Act formally ended voter registration discrimination, workplace discrimination (although only in facilities that served the general public), and school segregation (United States Justice Department, 2011), but it was not enough to guarantee voter protection. In 1965 the Voters Rights Act was signed into law making it illegal for any state to engage in discriminatory voting practices which, until that point, had been responsible for much of the disenfranchisement experienced by African Americans since their arrival in the United States (United States Department of Justice, 2011).

The accumulation of shared social, educational, economical, and political experiences for African Americans since arriving in the United States has ingrained a collective identity ideology that is centered in what Ogbu (1981) described as “outcast status”. This collective identity has influenced African American children educationally in several ways. First, it allowed African American children to become disillusioned regarding the value of education and the importance it would have in their lives. Second, it created a divide between the African American community and the schools that
served them, creating conflict and distrust. Lastly, it affected the confidence of African Americans who believe they cannot compete with Whites in regards to academic testing and good jobs (Ogbu, 1981; Fordham, 1985). Researchers believe each of these three responses by African Americans were developed as survival strategies and coping mechanisms, ultimately serving as necessary modes of adaption to the external forces they faced (Ogbu, 1981; Fordham, 1985).

**Oppositional Collective Identity**

As previously stated, African Americans’ collective identity was developed through their shared experiences since they were first brought to this country as slaves. Out of those shared experiences African Americans developed their own set of folk theories, strategies and methods that then have been passed down from generation to generation providing their children the knowledge and understanding of who they are in America and what they need to do to experience social mobility. But what happens to African Americans’ collective identity after generations of pervasive and systematic disenfranchisement? How do those experiences shape African American’s folk theories, and what are the messages that get passed down to their children (overtly and covertly) about their place and their future in this country.

Ogbu & Wilson (1990) state that,

...most importantly, generations of shared knowledge and experience of barriers in employment appear to have led African Americans to believe that they cannot “make it” by merely following the rules of behavior or cultural practices that work for White America (p.28).
After years of anger, resentment and cultural mistrust associated with systematic disenfranchisement, African Americans have developed what Fordham & Ogbu (1986) described as an oppositional collective identity. Ogbu & Simons (1998) suggest to some extent that oppositional collective identity of African Americans is defined by the differences that exist between their culture and White culture, and has in turn developed into what the authors describe as a “counterculture”, which can be summarized as, what is appropriate for White people is not appropriate for Black people. Their oppositional collective identity serves to protect their sense of identity from the psychological and physical assault associated with racism by distancing their identity from what they perceive as the identity of the dominant White culture (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

According to Ogbu (2004, p.14)

> Blacks were required to behave and talk the way White people actually behaved and talked: (a) in situations requiring the mastery of certain White knowledge, behaviors and speech, such as for formal education, upward social mobility and participation in societal intuitions controlled by White people, while (b) Blacks were also now required to behave and to talk like White people to gain social acceptance and to be treated as social equals by White people. Blacks therefore, now had to master two sets of cultural and dialectal frames of reference: (1) Black ways of behaving and talking among themselves; and (2) White ways of behaving and talking in White-controlled situations.

This has best exemplified by African American men who have struggled to meet mainstream definitions of masculinity, such as provider, protector, and disciplinarian (Oware, 2010). Within American culture it is expected that adults (particularly men) will be able to hold a good job that enables them to
take care of their families, and will provide the opportunity of advancement. In spite of this, ecological forces such as disparities in earning potential, and employment, along with unequal access to educational opportunities, have served as enduring obstructions to African American males' fulfillment of the mainstream definition of manhood. In response, African American men have redefined their manhood in a manner that has come to reflect the alienation and disenfranchisement they have experienced in this country. In the formation of their oppositional collective identity, they have established sets of behaviors, events, symbols and meanings that signify their cultural identity. In many respects African American males have done so by also defining the same characteristics as the dominant White culture (Ogbu & Fordham, 1986). It is here that we can begin to see how African Americans developed the “burden of acting White.”

The Burden of Acting White

To understand the “burden of acting White” within the African American community Fordham and Ogbo conducted research within one Washington DC high school. Through student interviews the following are five key behaviors that Fordham and Ogbo (1986) were able to identify as themes in what it meant to “act White”. They were: (1) speaking standard English; (2) spending a lot of time in the library studying; (3) working hard to get good grades in school; (4) getting good grades in school; (5) being on time. While not an exhaustive list of what Fordham and Ogbo found, the themes show a distinct relationship between a significant number of pro-
school behaviors and what African American students are associating with “acting White”. Regardless of region, social class or age there is substantial documentation of similar types of behavior that have been labeled as “acting White” within the African American community. Tatum (1992), through interviews with African American college students, identified two significant findings. First, she found a relationship between the students’ level of educational achievement and their related success-oriented behaviors. Secondly, she found that all of the academically successful students had experienced varying levels of conflict with other African American peers who had labeled them as “trying to be White”. Ford and Harris (1996) found through their study of African American elementary aged children from low-socioeconomic backgrounds that students were teased and rejected because of their academic achievement. Neal-Barnett (2001), through her research, found that high achieving African American youth in her study were often labeled as “acting White”.

**African American Male School Failure and the Implications**

One of the most revealing statistics about just how poorly African American males are performing nationally are their high school graduation rates. *Figure 1* (Jackson, 2010) provides the high school graduation rates of the 2007/8 cohort in the five states that had the largest populations of African American males.
These five states represent approximately 35 percent of the entire high school graduation population for African American males for 2007/8, and when combined African American male’s high school graduation rates drop to 42 percent, which is five percent below the African American male national average and 36 percent below their White male counterparts in those same five states (Jackson, 2010).

What happens to students that do not graduate from high school? For those students that choose to seek low-skilled employment, statistics show that by age 25 they can expect to earn on average $19,405 a year (Hull, 2011), which is only $8,415 over the national poverty level for a single person (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). In addition, statistics also show that nearly half of the heads of households on welfare are high school dropouts (Schwartz, 1995). Researchers such as Lochner and Moretti (2003) and Spencer (2011) have found a direct relationship between one’s education level and crime. As it currently stands, high school dropouts make up nearly half of the United State’s prison population (Schwartz, 1995).
In regards to African American men, Abby Ferber (2007) found that one third of all Black men between the ages of 18 to 39 can expect to be jailed, paroled, or put on probation during their lifetime. In fact, as of 2000, for the first time in the United States’ history, there were more African American men in prison (791,600), than enrolled in college (603,032) (BBC, 2002). Conditions have been so bad for young African American males and for so long, that within popular literature they have begun to be referred to as an “endangered species” (Majors & Billson, 1992; White, 1999).

While the statistics documented above are focused on African American males, high school aged and beyond, research shows that academic disengagement for young African American males can begin as early as the third grade (Cameron, 2002). For students defined as disengaged, the patterns show that they will progressively withdraw from their school experience, and will hence struggle to find their path in the classroom, and ultimately investing their time and means in interests outside of the classroom.

The academic underachievement of African American males has been well documented within poor, urban communities. Interestingly, recent studies have begun to find similar results in affluent African American communities, where African American males are fairing the worse of all minority subgroups (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990; Fordham, 1985; Irving & Hudley, 2008; Osborne, 1997). One explanation for the academic struggles of African American males of low and high socioeconomic status was provided by
Harris (1995) who explored the idea that the phenomenon is rooted in African American males over reliance upon their peer relationships which research has shown to be the strongest amongst African American boys. His account suggests that peer groups provide youth with a community, where they experience a sense of belonging outside of their families, and that through their peer groups, youth learn how to communicate, cooperate, and manage relationships. Success within a peer group can build self-esteem and provide the participants skill sets that can be applied to other situations. Harris (1995) suggests that every peer group has its own identity, which then determines the values and activities that become emphasized amongst group members, some groups value academic achievement, while others may reward members that play the class clown, or school bully. For African American males, peer groups are vital to their sense of identity and belonging. Research has shown an overdependence on peer groups can diminish independence amongst group members (Harris, 1995).

Almost universally, research has shown that African American male students acknowledge the importance of education in relationship to future success (Carter, 2006; Irving & Hudley, 2008; Ogbu, 1981; Fordham, 1985; Warikoo & Carter, 2009). In fact, African American males educational aspirations are no different than their White peers. Conversely, the same research also shows that young African American males do not believe they can achieve their desired educational outcomes, nor do they understand or value the necessary work required to achieve those outcomes (Harris, 1995;
Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Harris (1995), discussing the powerful peer group influence for young African American males, states:

Unlike their European American counterparts, African American male adolescents are more likely to deny, devalue, and actually forgo intellectual interests to avoid the ridicule and shame that arise from academic success (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Harris & Majors, 1993; Mickelson, 1990).

Another explanation for the academic struggles of low and high socioeconomic status African American male students is focused on how they have defined their masculinity. Hall (2009) argues that the historic disenfranchisement of African American males has led them as a group to embrace their inability to meet mainstream standards of manhood and to instead develop their own sub-culture of masculinity that is entrenched in their oppositional collective identity. Amongst African American males, masculinity is defined by their physical prowess, their invulnerability, their sexual promiscuity, and their sense of style. In fact, studies have shown that young African American men view academic achievement as more appropriate for girls, while they see their success measured by nonacademic indicators such as their athletic ability, style, walk, speech, and disposition (Harris, 1995; Irving & Hudley, 2008; Majors & Billson, 1992). It is believed that a primary function of these success measures is to provide African American males with a means to control the fear associated with not feeling able to meet the expectations associated with manhood, as defined by the dominant White culture (Hall, 2009). Instead, these success measures
provide the opportunity for African American males to demonstrate their sense of power and control on their own terms, while also projecting, and enhancing their self-esteem and pride (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990). Research shows that, within the African American community, males who excel in these success indicators, are rewarded with status as leaders and are revered by their peers. Interestingly, the same research shows that those who struggle to meet the standards established through African American success measures are often ridiculed and rejected by their peers. What is most important to note is that none of the standards established within the African American male definition of masculinity are in accordance with what have been established as pro-school behaviors necessary for educational achievement. In fact, researchers have found that for African American males, oppositional collective identity is in many ways incompatible to what is required for school success (Young, 2007; Ogbu, 1984; Fordham, 1985).

A final explanation of why low and high socioeconomic status African American males are struggling academically has been linked to key elements of the African American oppositional collective identity that has to do with trust. Irving & Hudley (2008) state that they believe that cultural mistrust is the single most important relationship in determining educational achievement for African American male students. The authors define cultural mistrust as “the tendency for African Americans to distrust institutional, personal, or social contexts that are controlled by Whites (Irving & Hudley, 2008, p.679)”. Through their research they discovered
that, as an African American male student’s level of cultural mistrust increased, their expectations about the benefits that could be obtained through school decreased accordingly, which then led to an increase in their levels of oppositional cultural attitudes (Irving & Hudley, 2008). The existence of cultural mistrust in association with oppositional attitudes work together to undermine the school success of African American males, even amongst students from high socioeconomic status groups (Ogbu, 2004; Irving & Hudley, 2008). Despite coming from financially secure homes and environments where the values of character, work ethic, and educational achievement are taught and reinforced, high socioeconomic status African American males also struggle with feelings of cultural mistrust and to varying degrees internalize the values associated with Black male masculinity and oppositional collective identity (Harris, 1995; Ogbu, 2003).

It is important to note that aspects of Ogbu’s research in which he found elements of an oppositional collective identity amongst affluent African Americans have come under scrutiny. It has been suggested that, because he did not incorporate a sample group of White students from the same school in which his research was conducted, that he missed the opportunity to establish a causal relationship between group members’ race and the effects that race had on their school performance (Nasir, 2004).

**Challenges to Ogbu’s Cultural-Ecology Theory**

Throughout the research regarding African Americans’ school performance, there is a basic assumption about how oppositional collective
identity influences their educational achievement. Through an oppositional collective perspective it is believed that African Americans have developed what can be termed maladaptive values and beliefs towards education and school performance. But what if the collective identity of African Americans is more than oppositional? What if, instead, the collective identity that develops within young African Americans, regardless of their circumstances, is considered inspiring, hopeful and achievement oriented?

Since John Ogbu first developed his cultural-ecological perspective over two decades ago the model has garnered its fair share of accolades. It has also come under significant scrutiny by academics and researchers alike. While many have agreed with the idea that African Americans have developed a collective identity as a result of their ongoing experience with social, economic, political, and educational disenfranchisement, what has been contested is the notion that the inevitable result must be that young African Americans as a collective will develop maladaptive attitudes and behaviors towards educational achievement. In fact, one of the most significant shortcomings of Ogbu’s cultural-ecology theory is that it never provided an explanation for why many African Americans achieve despite their circumstances (Fordham, 1985; O’Connor, 1997). Every year untold numbers of African Americans succeed academically and professionally despite their socioeconomic class, despite being tracked, despite teachers’ expectations, and despite not having any role models for success (Young, 2007). One researcher who has been one of the most vocal advocating for the
need to understand high achieving African American students has been Carla O'Connor.

Building on the work of Ogbu, O'Connor (1997) studied a number of young African Americans who shared key demographic identifiers such as attending the same school, were poor, and lived off of public assistance, but also shared a strong sense of racial consciousness and a recognition of the racial subjugation their families and community members experienced. Through Ogbu’s cultural-ecology theory it could be assumed all of the students in O'Connor’s research would share similar attitudes and beliefs about education and its value. Instead, O’Connor came across great variation in the students’ outlooks. In her research, O'Connor (1997) found students’ perspectives ranged from cynicism and powerlessness, believing that African Americans did not have the opportunity of true social mobility, to the belief that African Americans can resist and struggle against oppression and experience social mobility through their own agency. To understand why some students were optimistic and hopeful despite having an acute awareness of ecological forces that could impede their progress, O’Connor focused her attention on six students that were all high achieving and optimistic.

O'Connor discovered through her research that the primary factors in determining academic achievement for young African Americans had less to do with their shared collective identity, but instead had everything to do with each student’s sense of individual agency and the belief that through their
effort, they could experience success in the future. The six students O’Connor focused on were described as the resilient six “because they were optimistic and high achieving despite expressing theories of making it which have been shown to make others give up and lose hope” (p. 597). The six students shared the belief that, despite the progress that has been made by African Americans, structural inequities still existed and there was still cause to distrust Whites. Nonetheless, they believed their dreams were attainable. In part, the focus of the resilient six students could have been attributed to the fact that they reported being successful academically throughout school. Yet, O’Connor had also encountered high achieving African American students that were less hopeful and optimistic about their futures. Herein lies one of the key findings of O’Connor’s work. O’Connor discovered that the resilient six students had two essential resources the other students in her research did not, including the high achieving but less optimistic students. First, within their home lives the resilient six had caretakers that confronted racist and oppressive situations that occurred in their lives directly, and were willing to take defiant stands or initiate legal action challenging institutions and their agents. Secondly, O’Connor discovered that the resilient six also had “intimate and sustained” relationships with adults that had displayed a high level of personal agency in their own achievement, and could now provide them with guidance in how to navigate potential barriers.

Another key development in opposition to Ogbu’s work came from Prudence Carter who, like O’Connor, has been one of the most influential
voices advocating an alternative perspective to Ogbu’s cultural–ecology theory to explain African American school performance. Carter, O’Connor, and Ogbu all share the belief that African Americans’ experiences with systematic disenfranchisement, racism, and oppression have a significant influence on their collective identity. Yet, rather than choosing to focus her attention on successful African American students, as did O’Connor, Carter challenged Fordham and Ogbu’s theory of how minority students respond to the “burden of acting White”. An ongoing critique of Fordham’s and Ogbu’s cultural-ecological perspective is that the theory posits the notion that African American students, because of their oppositional collective identity, either seek to cultivate their own minority identity or they seek to adopt characteristics of White culture. Carter’s research seeks to expand that idea by providing a more complete picture of the adaptive methods utilized by students within the school setting.

Carter’s (2006) research demonstrates how three groups of African American and Latino students from similar economic backgrounds differ in their responses to the influences of race and culture on their educational achievement. In addition, Carter chose to explore how those students’ beliefs, opinions, and attitudes around the concept of “acting White” interplayed in their everyday life. This is a distinct difference between Carter and O’Connor (1997) who chose not to explore the concept of “acting White”, but did state that none of the six resilient students appeared to “think White”.
In Carter’s (2004) analysis of her participants’ resistance to “acting White”, she explored:

(1) Language and speech codes; (2) racial and ethnic in-group/out-group signifiers centered on cultural style via dress, music, interaction, and tastes; (3) the meanings of group solidarity symbolized by the racial composition of students’ friendship and social networks at school; and (4) interracial dynamics about the superiority of Whites and the subordination of racial and ethnic minority groups (p.306).

Through her research Carter (2006) discovered that African American and Latino students on a daily basis did not appear to resist “acting White”, but instead found that a significant number of the students did seek to demonstrate their “Blackness” or “Spanishness”. All of the students that participated in her study maintained strong self-concepts anchored in their racial and ethnic identity. This finding is in accordance with O’Connor who also discovered that her six resilient students had strong racial consciousness. Unlike O’Connor, Carter then was able to divide her students into three types of ideological profiles: cultural mainstreamers, noncompliant believers, and cultural straddlers.

Cultural mainstreamers academically were the highest achieving and were generally racially and ethnically aware, but believed that minority groups should assimilate into mainstream culture. These students focused on their success within mainstream society, and more often than not would seek to emulate those they saw in power (Carter, 2006; Warikoo & Carter, 2009). Cultural mainstreamers believe the behaviors they have adopted that
have been termed “acting White” are in fact markers of their own intelligence and necessary for their future success.

Noncompliant believers are made up of students that have strong cultural identities and have accepted racial stereotypes associated with achievement ideology. In many ways these students exhibited characteristics that Ogbu would have described as oppositional. While noncompliant believers acknowledge the value of doing well in school, they believe their schools uphold systemic inequalities. Noncompliant believers therefore show little interest in adopting school performance norms. Accordingly, the academic performance of students in this group ranged from average to failing.

Cultural straddlers are optimistic about their futures as cultural mainstreamers although they generally did not perform as well academically. They did, however, perform better academically than the noncompliant believers. Students within this group were defined as the girls and boys that were able to bridge the gap between cultural mainstreamers and noncompliant believers - they were able to operate within their minority group and White culture with ease. Carter (2006) describes cultural straddlers as “strategic navigators” who understand and can utilize the speech, dress, and cultural codes of both groups comfortably. By having an intimate understanding of both minority and White culture they were then able to challenge their schools regarding disparities they observed, while also possessing the drive to continue to achieve academically. One of the
unique characteristics found amongst cultural straddlers was that they actively sought to participate in multiple cultural environments (Carter, 2006).

In her research Carter sought to re-conceptualize the manner in which African American and Latino students were viewed in relation to “acting White”. Building on the work of Fordham & Ogbu, Carter provides evidence of African American and Latino students that were able to find refuge in both their minority identity and dominant White culture. Carter (2003) insists that minority students’ resistance to “acting White” does not have to mean they will unequivocally reject pro-school behaviors associated with educational achievement. By providing a more holistic picture of African American and Latino students, Carter highlights the benefits minority students stand to gain when they move away from an either/or approach, to viewing their minority and White cultures, and instead seek to identify with both.

**African American Male College/University Presidents**

The African American male college/university president is an anomaly not just within the African American community but also within higher education. African American male college/university presidents were chosen as the subject for this study for five specific reasons: 1) the uniqueness and exclusivity of their positions, 2) what the position represents in education and the influence presidents hold, 3) the intimate knowledge each president has in the field of education, 4) the influence their position
can have on young people and the country, and 5) the substantial academic, social, and professional barriers each president had to overcome to attain their position. If patterns can be identified amongst the African American male college/university presidents and how their sense of self-efficacy was developed and cultivated as youths, there is potential to shift how African Americans are studied in relation to school performance.

**The African American Male President & Their Stories of Achievement**

Birnbaum (2001) stated, “The college presidency is one of the most prestigious roles in American society” (p.212). College and university presidents stand at the pinnacle of higher education leadership (McLaughlin, 1996), representing not just the institution for which they work but also, often, the communities in which the institutions dwell. College and university presidents are the face of their institutions, establishing the school’s vision and facilitating the actualization of the institution’s mission. The position of college and university president is highly coveted, and the competition for each opening consists of extremely competent, educated men and women, who are often proven leaders.

Historically, as a result of racism and segregation, the position of college and university president was not open to African Americans. It has only been since the Emancipation Proclamation and later the Civil Rights movement that African Americans began to experience equal access to all aspects of society including higher education and the office of college/university president (Willie et al., 1991). Still, despite the progress
African Americans have made in higher education, particularly in student participation, African American males have continued to be underrepresented as college/university presidents (June, 2007). In fact, some would argue that there are a number of higher education institutions that would still not even consider hiring an African American candidate as president (Birnbaum, 1999; Chenoweth, 1998; Wessell, 1991).

White males dominate higher education leadership, representing 89.3 percent of the 4,352 college/university president positions across the country (ACE, 2007), and are an average age of 61 (Hartley & Harold, 2009). There are approximately 228 (5.2%) African American college/university presidents, with the vast majority (101) occupying positions in the country’s 106 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)(Evans, 2002). Currently, there are approximately 127 African American college/university presidents leading Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), of which only 36 are at four-year institutions and the remaining at two-year institutions (Chenoweth, 1998). Of the 228 African American led colleges and universities, approximately two-thirds (152) are led by African American men, which is 3.5 percent of the total number of presidency positions throughout the country (Birnbaum, 2001).

**Representative Bureaucracy**

Relative to the proportion of African American men within the United States, there is a significant underrepresentation of African American males as college and university presidents. Representative bureaucracy states the
importance of having leaders and administrators in place that are representative of the demographics of the institutions they lead (Jackson, 2004a). As previously mentioned, African American men make up 3.5 percent of the total number of college and university presidents. The total number of African American male presidents would have to increase by 2.6 percent (United States Census Bureau, 2010) in order to equal their approximate percentage of the total population. To understand how large of a gap 2.6 percent actually is, over the past 20 years the number of African American presidents has only increased by one percentage point.

The challenges of equal representation for African American males in higher education is not just particular to the office of the presidency, but at all levels of administration. Jackson (2004a) found that Whites are overrepresented relative to their proportion of the student populations at all levels of administration, while African Americans are underrepresented as full-time academic administrators relative to their proportion of the student population.

**Career Paths**

Career paths to the presidency vary depending on institution type. Thus far, the majority of presidents hired by institutional trustees are individuals that have worked as faculty within academia (Wessel, 1994; Evelyn, 1998). Understanding the career paths that are most influential in leading individuals to the presidency is important because, as stated by Birnbaum, “Not all candidates may be given serious consideration at all types
of institutions” (1999, p. 204). There are many factors beyond an applicant’s skill sets and accomplishments that are taken into consideration when hiring a college or university president. Many higher education institutions attempt to identify a “social match” for their institution (Birnbaum, 1999). Yet, by having a clear picture of what career paths most frequently lead to the office of the presidency, candidates can take control as they prepare themselves academically and professionally to accomplish this career milestone.

The majority of college and university presidents, regardless of institution type, begin their paths to the presidency as faculty members (Birnbaum, 2001). Individuals that hold doctorate degrees obtain the majority of faculty positions. After serving as faculty those interested in becoming a college president tend to move to the position of department chair, to dean, to vice president (Chenoweth, 1998; Wessel, 1994). Historically, those positions have not had significant numbers of African Americans within their ranks. From 1989 to 1997, the number of African American administrators increased by less than 8 percent, by far the smallest gain among the four major ethnic minority groups (Harvey, 2001). African Americans also reported virtually no progress from 1995 to 1997 (Harvey, 2001) in the acquisition of top-level administrator positions. Little is known about what happens to top-level African American administrators once they reach those positions (Jackson, 2004a). In part, this lack of information is the result of a limited amount of existing data about executive-level African American administrators. Nevertheless, it is also the result of what Jackson
referred to as the “nascent nature and presence of African Americans in executive-level positions”. As previously mentioned, historically African Americans have been excluded from these administrative positions (Chenoweth, 1998; Ramey, 1995; Lindsay; 1999, Jackson, 2004a). Despite the trend for institutions to hire individuals with faculty experience, it is more important for the individual to have had successful top-level management/leadership experience, which can come from inside or outside higher education (Wessel, 1994).

### The Barriers to Achievement

Two distinct assertions can be drawn when looking at the disproportionate number of African American male college/university presidents. One is that there are not enough qualified African American male administrators in the presidential pipeline. A second is that, as a result of racism and discrimination, there are significant barriers that African American male presidential candidates are confronted with which present real barriers to becoming college/university presidents. Both perspectives will be discussed in detail throughout this section.

### Challenges to Qualification

The Doctoral degree is a general, necessary prerequisite to even be considered for the position of president. In fact, as of 1995, 58.4 percent of all college and university presidents had a Ph.D. (Birnbaum, 2001), and as of 1996, 89 percent of all two-year college presidents held a doctorate (Evelyn, 1998). The number of African Americans that earned their doctoral degrees
in 2004 increased to 1,869, which was a 9 percent improvement from the previous year ("Doctoral Degrees Awarded", 2006). The progress of 2004 is significant because it marked the second record breaking year in a row that African Americans established a new all time high for doctoral degrees earned. The 1,869 doctoral degrees earned was an 85.3 percent increase overall for American Americans since 1990 ("Doctoral Degrees Awarded", 2006). While the gains of African Americans in relation to doctorate degrees earned are noteworthy, African Americans still are significantly behind relative to their percentage of the population (13%). For African Americans to earn their appropriate proportion of the country’s doctorate degrees (13%), they would have to double the record setting number of doctorate degrees earned in 2004. Thus, despite the positive trend, African Americans require a significant additional increase in doctorate degrees to reach their equal proportion to match their population in the country.

In further examination of the record-breaking number of African Americans earning their doctorate degrees, it can be seen that African American females are directly responsible for almost all of the gains. In 1977 African American females comprised 38.7 percent of all doctoral degrees earned by African Americans. However, by 2004 females consisted of 65.5 percent of the African American doctorates. As of 2004, African American males earned only 645 of the 1,869 doctorate degrees awarded to African Americans ("Doctoral Degrees Awarded", 2006). These statistics are particularly disheartening when it is realized that the 645 doctorate degrees
earned by African American men in 2004 is actually seven fewer than what they had earned in 1976 ("Black Women Conquer the Academy," 1997).

A second challenge for African American men affecting the number of qualified candidates for the position of presidency is that in recent years the overall number of African American executive-level administrators has declined. There has been very little research exploring the experiences of the African American executive-level administrators once they have obtained their positions (Jackson, 2004a). Executive-level administrators are defined as department chairs, academic deans, vice presidents, and provosts. These positions are important because the vast majority of college and university presidents are chosen from these ranks (Jackson, 2004a). In fact, 89.3 percent of all college and university presidents followed one of two paths. They were either a “Scholar” (66.3%), which is defined as presidents that have had full-time higher education teaching experience and their previous two positions were in higher education, or they were “Stewards” (22.4%), which is defined as those who have never taught within higher education, but their two previous positions were within higher education (Birnbaum, 2001).

What is known about the African American executive-level administrator is that from 1993 to 1999, this group experienced a decrease of 6.02 percent in their overall numbers (Jackson, 2004a) and, from 1989 to 1997, African Americans experienced the smallest increase in the overall numbers of administrators in higher education amongst all minority groups (Harvey, 2001). With African Americans loosing executive-level
administrative positions and experiencing the smallest growth amongst all administrative positions, there are clear reasons to be concerned regarding the overall number of African American men in the presidential pipeline.

The final challenge confronting African American men possessing the credentials and experience to qualify for the position of president is that they do not generally participate in important presidential pipeline programs. Evelyn (1998) reports this as the primary reason there are so few African American college/university presidents. Several programs have been established throughout the country to prepare presidential candidates. Some of the important programs are:

- The Kellogg Leadership Fellows Program sponsored by the National Association for Equal Opportunity;
- The American Association of Community Colleges;
- The American Council on Education Fellows;
- The Association of Community College Trustees; and

Many African American men who have reached the administrative level may believe college presidency is unattainable for them (Evelyn, 1998). One of the primary functions of the pipeline programs is to demystify the presidential pathway and to provide the necessary encouragement to move candidates forward. Pipeline programs accomplish this by providing participants with critical information and training in higher education and engaging participants in skill development exercises (ACE, 1993).
Candidates in these programs are shaped and molded through their experiences and are welcomed into a vast and critical network of professionals in higher education (Evelyn, 1998a). These programs serve an essential role in teaching African American male presidential candidates how to self-promote and market themselves appropriately (Evelyn, 1998b). Whether it is on paper or articulated, African American presidential candidates need to know how to improve their overall presentation (ACE, 1993).

**The Barrier of Race**

Racism has been part of American culture since the country’s inception. Many researchers today believe racism continues to be a contributing factor in explaining why there are so few African American male college/university presidents (Chenoweth, 1998; Jackson, 2004a). Holmes (2004) did find that there were a significant number of African American male administrators qualified to be college/university presidents. She also found that there were significant obstacles for African American administrators to overcome, all tied to race. More specifically, Holmes (2004) found that, since the repeal of affirmative action legislation, higher education has regressed in its effort to bring diversity within its administrations, particularly in the position of president. Secondly, Holmes (2004) believes that racial discrimination is the primary factor relegating the vast majority of African American college/university presidents to serving at two-year colleges or HBCUs. Of the approximately 105 African Americans
that lead PWIs, 69 are presidents of two-year institutions (Chenoweth, 1998).

The challenge for African American presidential candidates begins with overcoming the obstacles associated with race in the eyes of higher education institutions’ boards of trustees. Boards of trustees hold total institutional authority over their institution’s policies and decisions (Birnbaum, 1999). Within the college and university system, boards of trustees appoint the presidents and, once hired, the presidents are expected to serve as the board’s agent (Birnbaum, 1999). The fact that the majority of college and university board members are White men is perceived to be a significant barrier for African American candidates (Evelyn, 1998). African American men must compete against White males in front of trustees that are themselves predominately White males.

Often it has been found that boards of trustees are searching for presidential candidates with “unique qualities” and “personal traits” to manage the specific demands of their institutions. This ultimately leads these boards to search for a specific demographic profile (Wessell, 1991). One such demand an institution’s board of trustees must consider is the school’s alumni. For the vast majority of higher education institutions that are non-HBCUs, and even more so with elite institutions, alumni are predominantly White and the institutions’ trustees have to be concerned with meeting their alumni’s needs as well as not upsetting them (Chenoweth, 1998). Many of these board members may be “hypersensitive” and fearful
about hiring an African American candidate who may not be accepted by their constituencies (Chenoweth, 1998).

Another challenge associated with the role of president is the number of roles each presidential candidate is asked to fulfill. Boards are looking for candidates that are comfortable wearing a number of hats ranging from spokesperson to fundraiser, from financial officer to scholar (Ramsden, 1998). Having access to resources has, in some cases, become central (Chenoweth, 1998). Increasingly within higher education, private funding has become essential and institutions require their candidates to have access to sources of funding, and the ability to draw upon those resources (Chenoweth, 1998).

While many of the expectations placed on presidential candidates by the boards of trustees appear to be reasonable, there are concerns about inequities that may exist in how other aspects of presidential candidates’ backgrounds are considered. It has been argued that qualified African American presidential candidates must have an unblemished record to actually be considered as a candidate, while that standard may not be the case for White presidential candidates (Evelyn, 1998a; Lively, 2000). Dr. Reginald Wilson, a senior scholar for the American Council on Education, is quoted as saying “Black candidates have practically got to walk on water” (as cited by Evelyn 1998a). The challenges for African American presidential candidates are further compounded by the fact that, particularly in relationship with the position of college and university president, there is a
considerable amount of inbreeding (Vaughn, 2004). Boards of trustees are looking for leaders that have experience and understand their institutions’ challenges. As a result, over 90 percent of the presidents hired come from within the same ranks (Evelyn, 1998b).

**Self-Efficacy**

One of the essential shortcomings of Ogbu’s cultural ecology theory is the fact that it has failed to account for why many African Americans achieve academically (Fordham, 1985; O’Connor, 1997) despite, as argued by Ogbu (2003), sharing a collective identity that has led them to develop maladaptive attitudes and behaviors towards educational achievement. Nowhere does Ogbu explain what served as these students’ impetus and motivation to achieve academically despite their ongoing experience with social, economic, political, and educational disenfranchisement. Researchers such as O’Connor (1997), Sharon Fries-Britt (1997,1998), Kassie Freeman (1999), among others, have begun in recent years to research academically successful African American students. However, this body of literature is still young in its development, and thus far no one has sought to explore academically successful African American males through the perspective of self-efficacy.

According to Albert Bandura, the Canadian psychologist who defined/created the concept of self-efficacy, self-efficacy is at the very foundation of all human motivation and personal achievement (Bandura, 1995). Bandura’s rationale is simple: “unless people believe that their actions can produce the outcomes they desire, they have little incentive to act
or to persevere in the face of difficulties (Pajeres, 2002)

Self-efficacy is “the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). The concept is rooted in Bandura’s early work in social cognition theory during the 1960’s. Bandura began to theorize that people have the capacity to call upon symbolic capabilities to understand their environment through the use of purposeful actions, cognitive problem solving, the development of reflective thoughts and the ability to effectively communicate with others. It is through these processes, Bandura (1995) argued, that people are able to symbolize their experiences and give structure and meaning, and continuity to their lives (Pajeres, 2002). Self-directedness and forethought become distinctive qualities of social cognitive theory, providing individuals with the ability to determine a course of action, and establish challenges and goals that will guide their future actions. Bandura argues that once people adopt a set of personal standards, their subsequent actions, behavior, and motivation will then be regulated by the positive and negative consequences of those standards. Ultimately, Bandura believes individuals will choose to engage in activities that provide them with some sense of satisfaction and self-worth, while simultaneously leading them to avoid actions that can devalue their sense of ‘self’ (Pajres, 2002).

A person’s level of self-efficacy directly affects the degree of persistence (duration and intensity) they will put forth when confronted by obstacles or adversity (Lent et al., 1984; Multon et al., 1991). More
importantly, when confronted with failure or defeat, self-efficacy determines how quickly a person will rebound (Bandura, 1996). Those who have internalized high levels of self-efficacy understand that any challenge can be overcome with continuous/consistent effort, allowing failures to become learning opportunities and not demoralizing experiences (Bandura, 1996). Herein lies one of the key distinctions between self-efficacy and self-esteem. Self-esteem is the general sense one has regarding their self-worth, while self-efficacy is the acknowledgement and understanding of one’s specific capabilities.

**Efficacy Applied**

Beyond simply influencing a person’s sense of his own ability, self-efficacy has also been directly correlated with how young students perform academically and how they perceive their career options (Multon et al., 1991). Through continuous feedback between students and teachers, students’ sense of self-efficacy is constantly being molded. The process begins with students’ awareness of their own aptitudes because of their past experiences in the classroom, which in turn influences their expectations about how they will perform on various cognitive tasks (Multon et al., 1991). Multon et al. (1991) also found that students, who possess high expectations for themselves academically, would be more motivated and would persist longer in academic related activities than their peers. These efficacious behaviors on the part of students directly influenced their performance academically, which ultimately influenced the feedback they received from
their teachers (Multan et al. 1991). Lent et al. (1984) came to a similar conclusion and stated “both level and strength of self-efficacy for educational requirements were generally related to academic outcomes” (359). In short, students with high levels of self-efficacy achieve better grades than their peers with lower levels of self-efficacy (Lent et al., 1984).

Lent et al. (1986) state that a person’s sense of self-efficacy also correlates with what one perceives their career options to be. Efficacious beliefs have been found to influence a person’s career aspirations and strengthen his or her commitment to those aspirations (Bandura, 1981). Paulsen and Betz (2004) labeled this type of self-efficacy as career decision-making self-efficacy, stating that it directly impacts a person’s beliefs about whether he or she can fulfill the requirements specified by different career choices. This is similar to what occurs within academic performance, people with high levels of self-efficacy have higher expectations of themselves. They see themselves as able to accomplish a greater range of job related tasks and set higher goals (Bandura, 1981). Thus, career decision-making self-efficacy has an inverse relationship with career indecision (Bergeron & Romano, 1994; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996; Taylor & Popma, 1990, as cited by Paulsen & Betz, 2004). Unless people believe they can accomplish the associated job related tasks, they have little incentive to persist through obstacles and adversity (Bandura et al., 2001).
Self-Efficacy Acquisition

Self-efficacy can be acquired through four primary means: *mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion,* and *positive mood enhancing* (Bandura, 1994). *Mastery of experience* is cultivated through one’s ability to overcome obstacles by one’s own resolve. Beginning in childhood, everyone has an intrinsic need to understand and develop their capacities to influence their environment (White, 1959 as cited by Turner & Burke, 2003). Having the opportunity to experience success at varying levels is critical to the development of self-efficacy in individuals. Whiting (2006) suggests that self-knowledge acquired by overcoming challenges may be the missing ingredient needed by African American males to close the achievement gap.

Vicarious experiences create and develop self-belief in individuals. Seeing others (mentor and role models) who are similar to one’s self succeed develops self-efficacy. Having tangible examples of success leads individuals to believe that they, too, can succeed in a similar fashion. In addition, mentors and role models can serve equally important roles as they are charged with supporting and motivating others in developing their gifts and talents (Whiting, 2006).

Social persuasion generally works best at developing self-efficacy when in conjunction with another mean (Bandura, 1994). Social persuasion is the idea that an individual can be encouraged to believe he can achieve success. Social persuasion is more than simply “talking someone up”. It
involves providing calculated opportunities for individuals to experience success.

The final method in which self-efficacy is developed is *positive mood enhancing*. Positive mood enhancing works to reduce an individual’s stress by enhancing his ability to reach beyond his negative emotional or physical state to a place where he can exercise good judgment in difficult situations. Parents can teach their children to succeed and to learn how to cope with failure by first providing their children with age-appropriate challenges that are accompanied with warmth and encouragement as their children attempt to accomplish the presented task (Turner & Johnson, 2003).

Self-efficacy can develop as early as infancy and can be cultivated by parents throughout a child’s life. Parents can utilize *mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and positive mood enhancing* to increase their child’s confidence, self-knowledge, and sense of personal control, all essential in developing self-efficacy. Providing a child with an enriching physical and social environment is essential to developing that child’s cognitive competency (Bandura, 1994). Research has found that parents are best able cultivate their children’s sense of self-efficacy when they have a sense of their own efficacious behavior. This was evidenced by research conducted by Turner and Johnson who found that “efficacious parents seemed to have more positive parental beliefs and better parent-child relationships, which resulted in higher master motivation in their children in spite of financial limitations” (2003, p.502).
**Efficacy Cultivated**

Pajares (2002) goes beyond simply explaining Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy, and delves into how self-efficacy can be cultivated and developed within a child’s life. Using Bandura’s concept of social cognitive theory, Pajares (2002) postulates that parents and other significant figures within a child’s environment can use the theory as they help the child develop a sense of wellbeing. Social cognitive theory uses the concept of “triadic reciprocity” to describe the relationship between personal factors, behavioral factors, and environmental factors and how each factor interacts with the others to create experiences for an individual (Pajares, 2002), see Figure 2.

Figure 2: How Self-Efficacy is Cultivated

By focusing attention on any one of the three factors, one can increase an individual's sense of self-efficacy. A clear example of how self-efficacy can be developed in a child is provided by Pajares (2002) who presented the scenario of secondary school teachers who he believes are responsible for improving their students’ academic performance and are accountable for
building their students’ confidence. Pajares states, “Using social cognitive theory as a framework, teachers can work to improve their students’ emotional states and to correct the students’ faulty self-beliefs and thinking habits (personal factors); improve their academic skills and self-regulatory practices (behavior); and alter the school and classroom structures that may work to undermine student success (environmental factors)” (2002, p.2).

The result of student-teacher interactions demonstrates the bidirectional influence that leads to the development of an individual’s self-efficacy.

**Efficacious African American Males**

Self-efficacy lays at the foundation for all other characteristics that support academic success within individuals (Whiting, 2006). Whiting (2006) argues that African Americans with a strong sense of self-efficacy share several key characteristics: “a) high resilience, b) high self-confidence, c) high self-control, d) a strong sense of self-responsibility, and e) a clear understanding of the task at hand and the belief that they can accomplish all the subtasks of the intended goal” (p.224).

Efficacious behaviors enhance human accomplishment and can increase an individual’s sense of wellbeing. It is a key character trait that is shared amongst individuals that are successful professionally (Whiting, 2006). Thus, understanding how high levels of self-efficacy have been cultivated within young African American males becomes paramount and has the potential to be a vital resource in addressing increasing concerns about young African American males’ academic performance. Currently, young
African American males are graduating from high school at record lows and are experiencing record drops in their college enrollment (Whiting, 2006). Understanding what instills self-efficacy within young African American males can help them to be more resilient and persistent as they face barriers and challenges at home, school, and in their communities (Whiting, 2009; Lent et al., 1984; Multon et al., 1991).

**Learning From Their Legacies**

The African American college/university presidents that will be represented in this study will all have achieved at the highest level educationally and professionally. This study will explore each president’s knowledge, insight, and wisdom regarding Black male academic achievement and school success through their own personal accounts. Currently there are no other studies of this kind and this study intends to fill that void. By sharing each president’s story, this study will add to the growing body of literature that has sought to understand highly efficacious and successful African American males by studying a group that has achieved and has been the most successful in the classroom. As previously mentioned, this work is not just about school performance. More importantly, it is about understanding how highly efficacious African American males form their educational identity through their experiences with race and gender. This study seeks to understand how each president’s educational beliefs informed their achievement ideology, encouraged their aspirations, set their expectations, which allowed each of them to negotiate oppositional attitudes
they may have had towards learning. It is within their stories that new learning begins. It is their stories that represent the body of knowledge that *Getting It Right: African American Male College Presidents and Their Early Cultivation of Self-Efficacy* will seek to contribute.

As previously discussed in the literature review, ecological factors associated with African American’s systematic disenfranchisement socially, economically, politically, and educationally have had lasting impacts on their culture and on how males define their masculinity. Through Ogbu’s cultural-ecology theory it was shown how, over time, African Americans developed what he phrased as an oppositional collective identity, which was shown to have an inverse relationship with school performance. It was also shown that several researchers believed Ogbu’s cultural-ecology theory was too limiting in its definition of African American culture, and that it failed to account for the varied dispositions African Americans have towards education. One such perspective was O’Connor who was one of the first to point to Ogbu’s failure to explore high achieving African Americans and the value that could be learned from studying that population. Another was Carter who, found great variation in how African Americans internalized and expressed their oppositional dispositions towards education, and discerned three distinct groups; noncompliant believers, cultural straddlers, and cultural mainstreamers. Noncompliant believers reflected the characteristics Ogbu believed led African American students to school failure. Carter’s cultural mainstreamers in many ways reflected the characteristics Ogbu
argued would lead them to being labeled as “acting White” because of their perceived cultural disconnect. Cultural straddlers represented an entirely different group of students that had not been previously discussed in literature. These students lived comfortably in both their Black and White worlds, finding authentic value in both. This section was about understanding the complexities associated with the formation of African American males’ educational identity and beliefs, and how unique those who have achieved academically truly are.

In the pathways to the presidency section of the literature review the gross disparities that exist for African American males within all levels of higher education was presented. As stated, African American men are underrepresented amongst those who attain their doctorate degrees or serve as department chairs, deans, and provosts. Therefore, the pipeline of potential African American male college/university presidents is limited. What is clear is that there is a lack of qualified African American male candidates and that African American men are still encountering forms of systemic race-based discrimination within higher education. By understanding the conditions in which African American men have ascended to the position of college or university president at HBCUs or PWIs, one can appreciate the levels of perseverance, fortitude, and commitment that these men required to reach their positions. It is only then that one can genuinely appreciate how exceptional these men are in their achievement, and how valuable a study of their leadership characteristics could be.
While the college/university presidents that participate in this study had variations in their identifying demographics such as location of their hometown, family structure, schools attended, etc., the study theorized that each African American male college/university president would share many efficacious traits and that distinct patterns of the early cultivation and development of self-efficacy could be discovered. As previously mentioned, self-efficacy is the unwavering belief that one has in their own abilities. Self-efficacy can frame thought, shape perspective and, most importantly, push men and women through their most trying times. One interesting finding throughout the literature reviewed was how frequently, when discussing educational achievement elements of efficacious behaviors were described (O’Connor, 2007; Tatum, 1992; Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005; Hall, 2009). Being aware of how self-efficacy influences, shapes, and enhances educational identity and beliefs became essential to knowing and understanding African American males. There are many highly efficacious African American men that had to negotiate their oppositional disposition towards education and that have been challenged by the same ecological forces that have entrapped so many young African American males. In spite of these oppositional forces, they achieved academically and professionally and their stories need to be told.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine how African American male college/university presidents cultivate a sense of self-efficacy. As noted in Chapter I, very little research has been conducted that pertained to African American male college/university presidents. The presidents in this study were asked to reflect on their personal and professional lives, and about their development as academic leaders with a focus on how their sense of self-efficacy was cultivated as they negotiated multiple sub-cultures within complex socio-cultural and professional environments.

Conceptual Framework

As covered in Chapter 2, Ogbu’s cultural-ecology theory (CET) and Bandura’s social cognitive theory (SCT) utilize three primary factors (environmental, behavioral, and personal) to explain the normative patterns of behavior within academic settings. While Ogbu and Bandura are similar in their acknowledgement of the importance of each factor, how they apply and interpret the relationship among these three factors is very different. Thus, they come to very different conclusions on how each factor affects young people in academic settings.

Ogbu explored the influence of environmental factors as the starting point for understanding how group culture is formed and how culture influences the behavioral and personal factors for a group. He sought to identify commonalities that existed among enough members of a group so
that he could then generalize about that group and establish normative patterns of behavior. Ogbu contended that African Americans’ school failures could be correlated first, historically with their initial enslavement and then with their ongoing disenfranchisement politically, economically, socially, and educationally (extended environmental factors) in the United States. Ogbu asserted that in response to their often-hostile environment, African Americans developed an oppositional collective identity which is counterculture to America’s dominant White culture, and argued that this oppositional culture served to protect African Americans’ identity and their sense of self, control, and power. However, specifically for African American males, Ogbu stated that their oppositional collective identity led them to define their masculinity through several non-traditional definitions and stereotypes, resulting in normative patterns of behaviors that do not encourage or support their academic achievement. Ogbu & Simons (1998) contend that these normative patterns of behavior are then passed from generation to generation through “folk theories” that convey consistent messages that they will never be treated fairly in America, and that they cannot “make it” by adopting “White ways” of thought (personal factors).

While Ogbu’s CET is a compelling cultural explanation for the school failures of African American males, it failed to bridge the relationship between African Americans’ oppositional collective identity and the normative patterns of behavior that exist in the subculture of academic settings. This is evident through several shortcomings that can be observed
in Ogbu’s CET when analyzed through a social cognitive perspective. First, Ogbu maintains that African Americans’ oppositional collective identity is the most significant behavioral factor contributing to the endemic academic struggles of African American males. However, he does not provide an explanation as to why many of these males succeed despite these challenges. Second, he overstated the influence environmental factors have on African Americans’ feelings about themselves and their psychological processes (personal factors), and thus failed to acknowledge African American males’ agency and their ability to independently determine their academic behaviors regardless of their environment. Third, Ogbu constructs the relationship between environmental, behavioral, and personal factors as one directional, with environmental factors being the starting point for understanding how these factors come together to influence a group’s school performance.

The issue of directional causality is where the greatest divergence can be observed between Ogbu’s CET and Bandura’s SCT. Bandura constructed social cognitive theory such that, unlike CET, the same three factors (environmental, behavioral, and personal) can be applied at the individual level (see Table 1). This shift in analysis changes the interaction among the three factors and provides a set of normative patterns of behaviors that people must master to achieve within an academic setting. As previously discussed, success within the SCT model is predicated on the reciprocal relationship between environmental, behavioral, and personal factors.
Through social cognitive theory it is understood that people are not simply “reactive organisms” molded and marshaled by the culture and environments in which they are raised (Pajares, 1996). Instead, SCT posits that men and women, through their cognitive processes, experience themselves and their normative patterns of behavior in their academic environments and thus have a tremendous amount of agency that they can exert on their own behalf to influence their environments. The relationship between environmental, behavioral, and personal factors is bi-directional (see Table 1) with no one factor being more important or influential than another. Instead, the factors work together creating both shared and individualized experiences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Ogbu Cultural-Ecology Theory</th>
<th>Bandura Social Cognitive Theory</th>
<th>Central Champion Model Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One-directional, reactive, group focused, weak on individual</td>
<td>Bi-directional, reciprocal, proactive, individual focused, weak on environmental</td>
<td>Bi-directional, reciprocal, proactive, incorporates environmental factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Environmental** | • Considers this the most important factor which influences behavioral and personal factors. | • Defined this factor as the home, school, and classroom settings that work to support or undermine a student's academic performance. | **Extended:**  
|                 | *Looks at:*  
|                 | • How involuntary minority groups were first incorporated into their majority cultures. | • Neglects historical influences.  
|                 | • How majority groups maintained their power and the subjugation of involuntary minority groups through political, economic, social, and educational, disenfranchisement. | • Neglects social, economic, political, and educational systems that can greatly influence a student's learning environment. | **Immediate:**  
|                 | • The implications disenfranchisement has on involuntary minority groups’ academic achievement. | | • The environments people interact with on a daily basis.  
|                 |                                                                                               |                                                                                                   | • Consists of the agents that represent those environments, e.g. home = parents & guardians; school = administrators & staff; and classroom = teachers. |
| Behavioral | Developed in reaction to cultural and historical forces experienced by a group, and as a result collective responses are generated. These collective responses develop into normative patterns of behaviors that can be observed within a group. In regards to involuntary minority groups, their normative patterns of behavior were established as a result of their collective responses to environmental factors such as oppression by a majority group. Over time these collective responses create a subculture within an involuntary minority group which serves to protect that group’s identity and sense of self. | Developed as a result of a reciprocal relationship between environmental, behavioral, and personal factors within an academic setting. Within this setting the academic skills and self-regulatory practices men and women bring to their academics are highly valued and considered the normative patterns of behavior within the academic subculture. The normative behavior patterns developed by group members as a result of their collective experience within their extended and immediate environments. Both environments (extended and immediate) have very specific patterns of behaviors which are required of group members if they are to be successful. Can serve to protect a group’s identity and sense of self. Can influence how group members perceive their role and responsibilities within political, economic, social, and educational settings. However, there are also normative patterns of behavior that allow them to be successful in an academic environment. Individuals need to have both sets of behavioral factors. |
When analyzing Bandura’s SCT through a cultural ecology perspective, it becomes clear that one of shortcomings of SCT is the fact that Bandura only researched dominant group members to draw his conclusions about the relationship between environmental, behavioral, and personal factors and how they influence individuals. Thus, Bandura failed to explore the real influence that the historical legacy of racism and discrimination can have on the lives of involuntary minority groups. Hence, while SCT does explore the effect that academic settings can have on students, it does not incorporate larger environmental structures such as the political, economic, social and educational forces and how they all shape culture and influence a group’s school performance.
By utilizing both CET and SCT in the examination of African American male’s school achievement, a more complete picture of what they must overcome at the environmental, behavioral, and personal levels to achieve in academic settings is provided (see Figure 3). Ogbu’s cultural-ecology theory provided a detailed understanding of how the values and beliefs of an African American male can be shaped by historical and societal influences (extended environmental factors). Bandura’s social cognitive theory showed how individuals could drastically shift how they perform academically by changing how they think and feel about themselves.
The historical legacy of African Americans in the United States is marred by unprecedented broad-based racism and discrimination - economic, political, social, and educational (extended environmental factors). In their schools and classrooms (immediate environmental factors), African
Americans have often been subjected to underfunded schools, poor quality teaching, biased curriculums, and tracking. These conditions lead to the development of what Ogbu & Simons (1998) defined as an oppositional collective identity, which has served to protect their identity, power, and sense of self (behavioral factors) from what they perceive as a hostile environment. Nevertheless, the successful navigation of those same extended and immediate environmental factors has also enabled many African American men to flourish in their academic and professional pursuits.

Bandura’s SCT, particularly in regards to school achievement, provided a lens for understanding that African American men can exercise choices in their thoughts and actions to succeed as professionals, in spite of, and because of, the environmental and behavioral factors described above. An analysis of Ogbu’s CET and Bandura’s SCT as complimentary rather than contradictory theoretical models, illuminated how African American male college/university leaders have been exposed to two distinct environments, extended and immediate. As a result of the dual exposure, African American men experience two clear sub-cultures, one that is defiantly oppositional and one, that is unique to academic settings. Each subculture provides its own normative patterns of behavior that African American men must respond to and negotiate to be successful. Successful negotiation of both sets of normative patterns of behavior was the result of individuals being able to acquire and utilize specific attributes that enabled them to transcend their
environments and the negative forces in their lives, to exhibit agency, and to make positive decisions about their future. Understanding this conceptual framework became essential in understanding why and how the African American male college/university presidents were able to achieve at such high levels despite contending with numerous barriers.

**Rationale for the Methodological Approach**

In-depth, semi-structured interviewing (a qualitative inquiry strategy) was chosen because it allowed the researcher the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the self-perceived efficacious attributes of the African American male college/university presidents who were the focus of this study. In-depth, semi-structured interviews are intensive dialogues generally done with a small number of respondents and normally provide multi-layered and more robust data than can be obtained from quantitative data or from structured interviews, which consist of a prescribed series of questions intended to provoke specific responses from the interviewee (Borg & Gall, 1989). To gather the data, semi-structured interviewing techniques enabled the opportunity to probe deeper into the interviewees when needed and provided the flexibility necessary to fully capture the participants’ responses. The strength of qualitative inquiry is that, “Many qualitative studies are descriptive and exploratory: They build rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are unexplored in the literature” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.33). In Patton’s discussion of qualitative findings, he describes the unique value of open-ended responses, which he believes
enable the researcher to understand the world as seen through the respondents’ eyes. In-depth interviewing is a very effective tool when seeking detailed information about a person’s thoughts and behaviors, or when trying to intimately understand a new issue (Neale & Boyce, 2006).

In addition, elements of phenomenology were used to guide the inquiry into the types of early life experiences of the college/university leaders, which included:

• Their parents, and the roles the parents played in each president’s life in developing their sense of self-efficacy.

• The way in which their schools (teachers and administrators) played a role in their development of self-efficacy, especially in terms of providing role models and nurturing their sense of self-efficacy.

• Their communities (including church) and the influential members therein, that, in their own and unique ways, contributed to each president’s sense of self.

• Their friends and the impact, which peers, had on each president’s life.

My aim as researcher was to understand and describe the social and psychological phenomena as experienced by each president through the lens of his own perspective. Phenomenology focused the type of questions that were asked, and allowed the researcher to utilize statements, meanings, themes, and general descriptions that came from the interviewees’ responses to understand the “essence” of their experiences (Creswell, 2007; Marshall &
The study also relied heavily upon direct quotations from the interviewees. This form of raw data in qualitative research revealed each president’s “depth of emotion, the ways they organized their world, their thoughts about what was happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions” (Patton, 1990, p.24).

The objective of this research was not to derive a statistically significant generalization that would support or refute existing theory. Instead, the intent was to increase understanding of how self-efficacy has been cultivated, both educationally and professionally, within highly successful men in the field of higher education. As such, this study seeks to generate transferable knowledge. The ability to gain a holistic view through naturalistic methods allowed for an inductive analysis of the data. The patterns and themes that emerged within each college/university president’s life formed the basis for the study’s conclusions, rather than seeking to fit the findings into existing prescribed categories. The use of in-depth interviews provided an opportunity to discover important patterns in each president’s motivation to achieve, when confronted with adversity and barriers, irrespective of existing theories and constructs relative to race and gender.

Given the nature of the study’s design, the researcher played a critical role as the facilitator of the “conversation” with each interviewee. The researcher established the tone in each interview that permitted the conversation to focus on the central ideas being explored in the study without steering the interviewees in any predetermined or off topic
directions. To prepare for the interviews the researcher conducted two pilot interviews with two African American male senior-level administrative leaders. The pilot interviews served two main purposes. First, they helped determine which open-ended questions worked best to elicit from the interviewees, specific reflections from their early lives and their efficacious experiences. Second, they allowed the researcher to practice conducting open-ended interviews, to listen carefully to the interviewees’ responses, and to determine when and how to probe deeper for further details without guiding the direction or content of the responses.

To gather the data, semi-structured interviewing techniques were utilized providing the researcher the flexibility to fully capture each participant’s response. Protocol for the semi-structured interview dictated that the interviewer utilize a prepared list of pre-determined questions that allowed enough flexibility to enable the researcher to deviate from the pre-determined questions when necessary to gather additional information (Borg & Gall, 1989). The research questions are listed in Appendix I.

Data Collection

This study explored the lives of eleven African American male past, present, or aspiring college/university presidents, nine from four-year private Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and two from four-year Predominately White Institutions (PWI). Eleven interviewees provided a number large enough to identify significant patterns in college/university presidents’ lives but was also small enough to allow the
researcher to accommodate each president’s very busy schedule. The first two college/university presidents (current, past, or aspiring) that participated in this study were chosen based on location, tenure, and availability. The researcher resides in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area and has significant ties in Atlanta, Georgia, both of which have a significant number of African American male college/university presidents residing. After the first two presidents were interviewed, the researcher asked each president to identify other current, retired or aspiring presidents they thought would be willing to participate in this study. This “Snowball” sampling technique provided two benefits. First, it served as a natural bridge to a list of new presidents. Second, a president’s referral provided validation to the study and made other presidents more likely to participate. Lastly, having presidents identify aspiring presidential candidates added a slightly younger pool of men to the study, broadening the range of ages of participants. In addition, including aspiring presidential candidates in the study provided a group of men the researcher could follow up with at a future time to inquire about the progress of their careers.

Having presidents from each type of institution added to the study’s variability in regards to past experiences and the professional goals of each participant. Once the finalized list of participants was determined, pseudonyms were applied to conceal their true identities.

Each president was asked to participate in an initial two-hour, face-to-face interview. These interviews were at a location of the president’s
choosing, with the intent of creating a relaxed, comfortable environment. In addition, each president was asked to participate in at least one follow-up interview, either face-to-face or over the phone, to clarify or elaborate on any information provided in the initial interview. This two-part interview technique, along with follow-up emails, ensured that the study had the requisite evidence necessary to substantiate any findings drawn from the raw data collected. Data was gathered from the interviews using a semi-structured, open-ended interview instrument, while utilizing two recording devices to capture responses. Notes were taken to document non-verbal behavior. The researcher also completed all of the interview transcriptions.

Data Analysis

As previously discussed, African American male college/university presidents have two distinct sub-cultures that they must respond to and negotiate to be successful, one that is defiantly oppositional and one that is unique to academic settings. The researcher gathered evidence within both sub-cultures utilizing Spradley’s method to interpret, code, and develop themes from the data.

Spradley’s method (1979) utilizes four types of analysis: domain, taxonomic, componential, and theme. This study focused on domain analysis as the primary approach to coding. Domain analysis made it feasible to identify the domains and semantic relationships of a culture. The use of Spradley’s method in this study made it possible to take each president’s expressed cultural knowledge from each sub-culture and analyze it in a way
that discovers different categories of knowledge within the presidents’ responses that could be identified within both sub-cultures. Once this was complete, it was then possible to identify specifically where the presidents’ experiences, knowledge, and behaviors were unique to each sub-culture, and also, where their experiences, knowledge, and behaviors merge within both sub-cultures to foster efficacious behaviors within each president (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Domain Merging

By using Spradley’s method for domain analysis for coding, it became realistic to identify:
• The barriers that prevent the presidents from potentially achieving within each sub-culture,
• What each president learned from each sub-culture,
• What enabled each president to resist the trappings of each sub-culture, and
• What enabled each president to excel within each sub-culture.

Research Biases

As the researcher of this study, and as an African American male and someone who has worked many years with young African American males, I am extraordinarily vested in understanding how to help African American males achieve academically and professionally. I have witnessed far too many friends, family members, and young male coworkers fail to achieve academically and professionally. They have struggled their entire adult lives to live—it is their stories and labors that drive me.

Limitations

There is a tremendous amount of research establishing the validity of self-efficacy as a theory. There are also important limitations associated with self-efficacy theory that must be noted. One such limitation is that the theory does not consider varying cultural differences within racial groups and how those differences can affect the acquisition and cultivation of self-efficacy. For some time, researchers have acknowledged the lack of ample research that includes African American families and other minority populations in the study of self-efficacy (Hagen & Conley, 1994; Multon et al., 1991). As
well, research that has included African American families frequently makes the mistake of failing to address the process variables associated with African Americans and instead chooses to make simple comparisons of minority and majority families (Turner & Johnson, 2003).

A second limitation in self-efficacy theory is that it suggests a person’s success is virtually inevitable if: he or she masters his or her experiences, has strong role models, has been encouraged and supported throughout his or her life; and has a strong belief in oneself. Self-efficacy theory fails to account for the impact that systemic institutional inequalities, racism, and discrimination, can have on the achievement of African American males (Wells, 1992). With the vast majority of research in the field of self-efficacy grounded in the experiences of the majority group, variables such as institutional racism and its associated barriers are not considered.

A third limitation, not associated with self-efficacy, is the study’s overall representativeness. As the researcher, I had limited time and finances to execute the proposed research which limited the number of participants to eleven African American male college presidents out of a possible 152. With more time, money, and resources to incorporate a larger, more representative sample size, the study could potentially yield different results in relation to the study’s research questions.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The three overarching research questions that informed the collection and analysis of data are:

1) Did self-efficacy play a significant role in each African American male college/university president’s life?

2) What is the relationship between each president’s level of self-efficacy and academic achievement?

3) What is the relationship between a president’s level of academic achievement and his professional success?

This chapter presents themes that were identified through an analysis of the data gathered from semi-structured interviews with eleven African American male college/university presidents. Participant responses were coded individually based on their responses to the interview questions. Open coding was used for the first round of analysis followed by an analytical organization of initial codes using Spradley’s method for domain analysis. The resulting codes were then re-organized into a master codex that aligned each president’s responses into temporal and thematic groupings. Themes and significant statements were coalesced and organized into an Interaction
Worksheet that provided three specific categories (External Environment, Interaction, Internal Person) to further enable analysis of the trends that arose within each participant while also continually comparing the trends with one another to construct recurring patterns that cut across the sample. The findings of these analyses are presented throughout this chapter.

Additionally, this chapter provides an overview of each participant’s background, collectively and individually. The presidents that participated in this study were assigned fictitious names, and elements of their background were changed to conceal their identity. Additionally, the names of institutions that the participants attended or worked for, along with the names of individuals who influenced their lives were also changed to further protect the presidents’ identities.

**Overview of Participant’s Academic and Personal Profile**

The total sample of eleven African American men ranged in age from mid-30s to mid-70s. Seven were standing presidents at the time of their interviews, two were retired but still working in higher education, and two were in senior level leadership and on a clear path to a presidency in the near future. Two of the interviewees were associated with Predominately White Institutions. Nine were associated with Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Four of the men interviewed served as president at two different institutions, and five served at one. Eight of the interviewees served as presidents in the South, two served in the Mid-West, and one in the North East.
Table 2: Participant Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Terminal Degree</th>
<th># of Presidencies</th>
<th>Institution Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ben</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Brantley</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Bruce</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Christian</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Keith</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Lewis</td>
<td>Senior Leadership</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>PWI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Nathan</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Raymond</td>
<td>President</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Dr. Simmons</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>PWI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Walters</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Williamson</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All data contained in this table is a reflection of each participant's position at the time of their interview.

Dr. Ben

Dr. Ben was born in the south and raised as an only child by his mother, a nurse, and his grandmother who worked in the laundry facilities at the local university. In contrast to his own upbringing, Dr. Ben described his community, which contained many two-parent households, as working-poor but with lawyers, principals, and janitors all living in the same neighborhood. Some were well educated and many were not. Dr. Ben grew up in an area in the south where there were very clear rules about race that African Americans needed to adhere to in order to ensure their safety.
Dr. Ben attended public schools and was placed in a special education class in the 4\textsuperscript{th} grade (behavior related issues). He remained there until the 8\textsuperscript{th} grade. Once he was mainstreamed, he quickly skipped a grade. Dr. Ben was part of the first class to attend their fully integrated high school. While in school, Dr. Ben remembers always serving as president of the student government and also reading the morning announcements. Additionally, he participated in ROTC for four years in high school and participated in a Veterans of Foreign Wars speech competition.

Dr. Ben attended a Historically Black College on a full scholarship where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree. There he continued his engagement as an accomplished student and active leader, serving as:

- President of the honors college his freshmen year.
- Business manager his sophomore year.
- Vice president of the student government as a junior.
- President of the student government as a senior.
- Student Ambassador at Large to the Board of Trustees.
- A member of ROTC for his first two years in college.

Dr. Ben then went on to attend two separate Predominantly White Institutions (both major research universities) for his Master of Science and his Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

Dr. Ben has worked in higher education for approximately 20 years serving, in a number of capacities including faculty, dean, executive vice president and provost. Dr. Ben has served as president at one institution.
Dr. Brantley

Dr. Brantley was born in the south and raised by his mother and father, both of whom were teachers. He was the oldest of three with two sisters. Dr. Brantley's family was more affluent than most in his community where many of the kids were raised by grandparents or a single parent. He attended segregated public schools until his senior year when his high school was integrated. Dr. Brantley reported being mostly an A student and graduated high school 4th in his class. While in high school Dr. Brantley stated that he:

- Played football, basketball, and tennis.
- Served as class president every year, including his senior year at his newly integrated high school.

Dr. Brantley attended a Predominantly White College where he earned his Bachelor of Arts. There he continued his engagement as an accomplished student and active leader serving as:

- Freshmen dorm hall representative.
- Class president his junior year.
- Vice president of the student government.

After college Dr. Brantley went on to attend two separate Predominantly White Institutions (both major research universities) for his Master of Arts and his Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

Dr. Brantley has worked in higher education for approximately 39 years serving as faculty, assistant vice president for academic affairs, vice
chancellor, and provost to name a few. Dr. Brantley has served as chancellor/president at two institutions.

\[\text{Dr. Bruce}\]

Dr. Bruce and his older brother were born in the South where they lived for the first 13 years of Dr. Bruce’s life. However, as a result of their father’s military service, Dr. Bruce and his family would have three significant moves eventually ending up on the East coast. Dr. Bruce was raised by his father and mother, who held a number of odd jobs, but served as the primary caregiver of Dr. Bruce and his brother. Dr. Bruce stated that they "lived in the projects" when they were in the south but had several family members, who lived in their community. When they moved to the east coast Dr. Bruce and his family were only the second Black family to ever live in their town, which had only been integrated for 10 years.

Dr. Bruce attended the neighborhood public schools throughout. In middle school, he was a part of the chess club and won his school’s spelling bee. He went on to the regional competition. Dr. Ben ’s high school was predominantly White. He played football, basketball, and ran track, but never sought leadership. While in high school, Dr. Bruce was invited to participate in a Latin seminar for advanced high school scholars. Additionally, as part of his senior project he translated half of the Iliad.

Dr. Bruce earned his Bachelor of Arts and his Doctor of Education at the same Predominantly White University. As in high school, Dr. Bruce was not active in a formal leadership role. However, he did become heavily
involved in student activism while an undergraduate. Dr. Bruce was in college at the apex of the Civil Rights Movement and was a central student figure on his campus leading student protests and working with University faculty and administrators. Some of his most significant involvements included:

- With another student, wrote the Black Manifesto that began the student protest at his university.
- With another student, started a campus magazine that detailed information for students about the Black Civil Rights Movement.
- The day Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated he was asked to speak to students who had gathered on his campus from the surrounding colleges.
- Led sit-ins at a neighboring institution in taking over their main administration building.
- Was one of four students who worked with faculty to initiate the African American studies department at his University.

Dr. Bruce has worked in higher education for approximately 36 years serving as faculty, dean, and vice president for planning. Dr. Bruce has also served as president at two institutions.

**Dr. Christian**

Dr. Christian was born in the south and raised by his mother and father who both worked for the local school system. His father was a music teacher and his mother was an elementary school teacher who eventually
became a guidance counselor. Dr. Christian is the oldest of three boys who grew up in a segregated community that was anchored by a university. Dr. Christian described their community as middle class and he shared that he had a number of extended family members in the community. Dr. Christian's grandfather operated the first black-owned grocery store in their city and Dr. Christian started working for money at his uncle's gas station when he was eight, pumping gas, washing and waxing cars, and getting change for customers. He stated that many of the homes in his community consisted of two college degree earners and that there were many professionals in their neighborhood, including doctors, pastors, and the president of the local university.

Dr. Christian attended a laboratory school at the local university throughout elementary school and then attended the public middle and high schools. During that time, he participated in Cub Scouts and later the Boy Scouts. Dr. Christian, while in high school, was engaged in several activities:

- Served as statistician for the baseball team.
- Was class photographer for a year.
- Was class treasurer for a year.
- Served as president of the New Farmers of America club.
- Was a member of the choir.
- Was recognized as the outstanding cadet of his ROTC unit.
- Swam in the local intramural swim league.
Dr. Christian attended a Historically Black University on a full scholarship and earned his Bachelor of Science degree. He then went on to attend another Historically Black University for his Master of Science and a major research university that was predominantly White for his Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Dr. Christian worked in higher education for approximately 30 years serving in the role of faculty, senior fellow, and as an executive director both at a university and with the United States government. Dr. Christian served as president at one institution.

*Dr. Keith*

Dr. Keith was born in the south and raised by his mother, a college professor, and his father who was a counselor. Dr. Keith is the oldest of two boys who grew up in a tight-knit community that was 98% Black. Dr. Keith described their community as strong middle-class with many two-parent households and stated that mailmen, dentists, doctors, teachers, and businessmen populated the community.

Dr. Keith attended public elementary and middle schools. While in elementary school Dr. Keith was referred to special education classes and was almost held back. He played football until the 8th grade. He went on to attend a well-regarded public magnet high school where he participated in various academic clubs, science fairs, and the National Honors Society. Interestingly, he ran for class president in the 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th grades and lost each year. However, during his senior year he ran for student
government president and won. Additionally, during his senior year, he participated in a rhetorical contest. While in high school he participated in summer enrichment programs on a college campus (one of which was for top high school students from his home state). Dr. Keith graduated from his high school as the class salutatorian.

Dr. Keith attended a Predominantly White University and earned his Bachelor of Science degree. While in college he joined a fraternity where he served in several leadership positions. Additionally, he served on the fraternity's national board as a senior, participated in a number of honor societies, and served as a residential assistant for a summer program.

Dr. Keith then went on to attend another Predominantly White University for his Master of Science degree and another Predominantly White University for his Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Dr. Keith worked in higher education for approximately 25 years serving as a vice president and a director to name a couple. Dr. Keith served as president at two institutions.

Dr. Lewis

Dr. Lewis was born and raised in the south. He lived with his mother who was addicted to drugs and his stepfather, also addicted to drugs, who left the home when Dr. Lewis was five. After Dr. Lewis’s stepfather left, Dr. Lewis’s mother moved Dr. Lewis and his older brother in with his grandmother. At age seven Dr. Lewis began to stay with various family members and friends until he graduated from high school. Dr. Lewis
reported during that time that he experienced stints of being homeless and sleeping under bridges. Information about Dr. Lewis’s biological father is unknown.

Dr. Lewis described many of the homes he stayed in as subsidized housing projects and "very rough". He stated that these communities were very poor and underserved. Dr. Lewis estimates that he attended seven different elementary schools and was placed in special education classes because of behavior-related issues. Dr. Lewis went on to say he attended only one middle school but estimated that he moved seven different times during that period and would take public transportation to school every day regardless of the distance from where he was living. While in middle school Dr. Lewis participated in band and ran for SGA president but did not win. However, he continued to participate in SGA.

Once Dr. Lewis arrived in high school he was mainstreamed with the other students and performed academically so well that he was able to transfer to a magnet high school. Dr. Lewis reflected that in his new high school many of the kids came from two-parent households and generally from middle-class backgrounds. While in high school Dr. Lewis became involved in:

• Band and was the section leader.

• PRIDE.

• SGA as the homeroom representative.

• Academic decathlon team.
• The debate team.
• Yearbook staff for a year.
• School newspaper.
• The international science and engineering fair (won gold).
• NAACP ACT-SO science & oratory competition (won 1st place).

Dr. Lewis attended a Historically Black University on a full scholarship earning his Bachelor of Science degree. There he continued his engagement as an accomplished student and active leader serving as:
• Senator in the SGA for one year.
• Secretary of student welfare.
• A member of the university band.

Realizing that he had chosen the wrong major, Dr. Lewis decided to obtain his Masters of Public Administration degree at a Predominantly White University. There he continued to pursue his interest in leadership serving as the senator for his university’s graduate student government.

Dr. Lewis then received his Doctor of Philosophy degree at a predominantly White major research university. Again, Dr. Lewis sought leadership and was elected president of the graduate student government.

Dr. Lewis has worked in higher education for over 10 years serving as vice president, assistant vice president, and director.

*Dr. Nathan*

Dr. Nathan was born overseas and raised by his mother and father. His father was a farmer and a tax collector; his mother was a seamstress. Dr.
Nathan was the fourth of six children (three brothers and two sisters) who grew up in a small rural community (pop. 200). Dr. Nathan described the community as a tight-knit farming village that had many two-parent households.

Dr. Nathan attended his local school. Upon completion, he and a small number of his classmates were selected to go on to a secondary school, which was the same boarding school his older brothers attended. There he participated on the cricket team (serving as captain) and in several schools clubs.

After secondary school, Dr. Nathan entered the workforce where he worked and took care of his wife and children for several years. Motivated by the success of his supervisors, Dr. Nathan decided to go to college. Dr. Nathan chose to attend a Historically Black University where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree. He then went on to earn his Master of Science and his Doctor of Philosophy from the same predominantly White major research university.

Dr. Nathan has worked in higher education for over 40 years and has served as vice president, dean, and director to name a few. Dr. Nathan served as president at one institution.

*Dr. Raymond*

Dr. Raymond was born in the south and raised by his mother and father until they divorced when he was 10. Dr. Raymond, the second of six children, stated that after the divorce, he and his siblings lived with his
mother who was a cook at a nearby military base. While their parents were married, they lived in a middle-class neighborhood. However, after the divorce, they moved to a predominantly Black low-income housing project.

Prior to the divorce, Dr. Raymond was enrolled at a private catholic elementary school. After the divorce, he was forced to attend four different schools during his 4th-grade year, but eventually ended up at the same public elementary school, which many in his family had previously attended, that was located on the military base where his mother worked. Dr. Dr. Raymond would go on to attend the local public middle school and high school. While in high school he was engaged in several activities:

- He served as class president.
- Was on the wrestling team.
- Was in the band & orchestra (beginning in the 4th grade).

Dr. Raymond attended a Historically Black College and earned his Bachelor of Arts degree. There he pledged a fraternity. Dr. Raymond went on to attend two separate predominantly White major research universities, first for his Master degree and then for his Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Dr. Raymond has worked in higher education for approximately 26 years serving as assistant dean, assistant vice chancellor, and vice president. Dr. Raymond served as president at one institution.

Dr. Simmons

Dr. Simmons was born in the south and raised by his mother who had divorced Dr. Simmons’s father prior to his birth. Together they lived with
Dr. Simmons’s grandmother, an uncle, and a cousin. This living arrangement continued until Dr. Simmons was eight and his mother remarried. Then Dr. Simmons and his mother began to live with his stepfather and his daughter. Dr. Simmons’s mother was a schoolteacher and his 1st grade teacher. His father was in the military but did not adjust well upon his return from war. His uncle had a PhD in Spanish and taught at the local high school and Dr. Simmons’s stepfather was an electrician. Dr. Simmons stated that when his mother was raising him they did not have a lot and that he faced a lot of challenges growing up in a predominantly White community.

Dr. Simmons first attended a parochial elementary school but switched to a private elementary school where he participated in mock debates. After elementary school Dr. Simmons transitioned to a public middle school and public high school. While in high school he was engaged in several activities:

- Ran track.
- Played football briefly.
- Joined the swim team.
- Was on the debate team.
- Joined the chess club.
- Participated in Model United Nations.
- Was in the choir.
- Was a part of Amnesty International.
- Was the first Black senior class president at his high school.
Dr. Simmons attended a Historically Black College at age 16 and earned his Bachelor of Arts degree. There he continued his high level of engagement:

- Served as a Residential Assistant for three years.
- Was a class officer his freshman and senior years.
- Was on the college’s debate team.
- Was a member of the Perspective Student Seminar.
- Recruited for the college.
- Was involved with the college’s student government.
- Was involved with a group called STRIPES that did campus tours.

Dr. Simmons went on to attend two separate Historically Black Universities where he first earned a Master degree in Public Administration and then a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Dr. Simmons has worked in higher education for approximately 17 years and has served as provost and senior vice president, assistant provost, dean, and faculty.

Dr. Walters

Dr. Walters was born in the south and raised by his mother and father who were never married. Dr. Walters lived with his mother and his seven brothers and one sister (Dr. Walters was a middle child) but saw his father (who was the father of three of his siblings) every day. His mother worked as a housekeeper and swept tobacco factory floors while his father was a janitor.
cleaning churches and office buildings. Dr. Walters described the community he grew up in as a tight-knit, rural, predominantly Black, working poor community.

Dr. Walters attended his community’s public elementary, middle, and high school, all predominantly Black but had White students bused in. In high school, Dr. Walters became a standout track and field athlete. As a result, he earned a full track scholarship in college.

Dr. Walters attended a Predominantly White University where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree. There he continued to run track, but after an injury his sophomore year Dr. Walters decided to give up track and focus completely on being the best student that he could be.

After completing his undergraduate degree, Dr. Walters decided to continue his education at the same institution, earning a Master of Arts degree. He later attended another Predominantly White University where he earned a Doctor of Education degree.

Dr. Walters has worked in higher education for approximately 27 years serving as provost, associate vice president, and director. Dr. Walters served as president at one institution.

Dr. Williamson

Dr. Williamson, the oldest of six, was born in the mid-west and raised by his mother and father. He had three brothers and two sisters. Dr. Williamson’s father worked for a trucking company and his mother was a stay at home mom. Dr. Williamson described his community as a tight-knit,
predominantly Black, working class community with many two-parent households.

Dr. Williamson attended predominantly White catholic schools from kindergarten through high school. There he participated in the school's religious group.

Dr. Williamson attended a predominantly White university where he earned his Bachelor of Education degree. He participated in two mock United Nation debates and was heavily involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

Dr. Williamson earned his Master of Science degree and his Doctor of Philosophy degree from another predominantly White major research university.

Dr. Williamson has worked in higher education for approximately 39 years serving as associate vice chancellor, executive director, and dean. Dr. Williamson served as president at two institutions.

**Home Communities**

Eight of the eleven presidents in this study grew up predominately in the south, where they also graduated from high school. The remaining three finished high school in three different regions: the Midwest, the East coast, and the Caribbean. Four of the presidents were raised in urban environments, three in the suburbs, and four in rural communities. All attended public high schools except one who graduated from a catholic high school. Two of the presidents’ public high schools were magnet schools. Six
of the presidents reported taking courses for gifted students at varying points throughout their education. Three had been recommended for special education classes during elementary school.

Nine of the eleven presidents came from Black homogeneous communities. Six of the nine attended predominately Black high schools, two attended newly integrated high schools, and one attended a predominately White catholic high school. The two presidents who did not grow up in Black homogeneous communities grew up in predominantly White communities and attended predominately White public high schools.

**Family Structure**

All but one of the presidents described being raised in relatively stable home environments. Seven reported growing up in a two-parent household and one reported growing up in a home with his mother and grandmother. Another stated, despite his mother and father no longer being together or in the same home, that his father was an everyday presence in his life; and one was raised predominately by his mother. The last person grew up in an unstable environment, primarily raising himself and was cared for by various relatives and the parents of his friends.

Two of the eleven presidents were only children; but reported having several relatives that were close in age that stayed with them for varying lengths of time. Three of the presidents grew up with only one sibling, two had two siblings, one had four siblings, two had five siblings, and one grew up with eight siblings.
Parent’s Education and Self-Identified Class

Two of the presidents reported that their parents had only an elementary school level of education. Four of the presidents’ parents did not persist past the completion of high school. Two had at least one parent with some post-secondary education, and the remaining three had parents who both graduated from college.

The economic class of each president was self-reported. The presidents did not grow up in affluent homes; however, several of them considered themselves well off relative to many of their peers in their predominantly Black communities. Five of the presidents reported growing up poor, while one president stated that he grew up in the lower middle class. The five presidents who reported growing up middle class, relative to their peers in their communities, were also the five presidents whose families had been to college.

Central Championship Model

The data collected and analyzed from the stories shared by the presidents interviewed led the researcher to develop the Central Championship Model. Throughout the presidents’ transcripts were numerous stories of how very specific men and women, “Central Champions”, guided their studies and their early careers, and provided the essential elements of mentorship that enabled them to believe in themselves in new and profound ways. Champions are defined by the Oxford Dictionary Online as “a person who fights or argues for a cause or on behalf of someone
else” (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/champion). Evident throughout the presidents’ stories was how vital a role their Champions played in their lives, always exceeding the expectations a mentee would have of a typical mentor. Their Champions consisted of men and women of all ages who were committed to the president’s academic and/or professional success and were willing to support, endorse, and advocate for them. While none of president’s used the term “champion” to describe the men and women that had the greatest impact on their lives, they did use a variety of related terms that will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Through the stories shared by the presidents, it becomes clear that their relationships with their Champions were central to their success as they navigated various personal, academic and professional challenges.

For a small group of the presidents these Champions revealed themselves prior to high school, some found them once they reached the workforce, and others were discovered at varying points in their collegiate studies. Regardless of when these relationships developed, the powerful bond that formed with each Champion would become indispensable in each president’s personal and professional development. The influence of these Champions should not be a surprise. Research has long acknowledged the importance of mentorship (Terrion & Leonard, 2007; Kay et al., 2009). However, existing research is less clear regarding the experiences, relationships, and actions that facilitate the process one must go through to
be proactive and responsive to appropriately seek, receive and take advantage of opportunities provided by a Central Champion.

The Central Championship Model reveals commonalities found throughout the early lives of the eleven presidents interviewed and details the relationship between the Central Championing they received and a series of reciprocal supporting mechanisms. These supporting mechanisms and the interactions among them prepared the presidents to seek out and to take advantage of the Central Championing offered to them. The nine key supporting mechanisms are: (1) family, (2) school, (3) enrichment activity participation, (4) esteem and leadership, (5) early academic identity formation, (6) interested and invested adults, (7) peer role models, (8) high school or college leadership, and (9) experience of success. Each of the categories has unique properties and dimensions. The following diagram gives an overview of the interactions between the Central Champion core and the key categories. The following sections will describe these characteristics for each category.
Central Champion

Dominant within the presidents’ interviews were their shared experiences with men and women that played a central role in their development and provided guidance often at critical junctures of their lives. This is a key distinction between central championing and mentorship. Typically, mentorship occurs much more frequently and is developed and encouraged more. It is one-directional in nature and provides time, insights, and wisdom to the mentee. Central championing is symbiotic in nature and requires reciprocity and commitment.

Each of the presidents had at least one individual in their life that can be defined as a Central Champion. However, many of the presidents had two
and sometimes three. Some of the presidents met their Champions in high school or earlier, others did not meet their Champions until college. Each president had at least one Central Champion that they met during their professional careers. Accordingly, this section has been divided into three subsections: the influence of early exposure, the influence of college exposure, and the influence of professional exposure. Each section details the experiences of three different presidents and how they were shaped and molded by their Champion(s) at that time. Table 3 provides a complete list of each president and when his Central Champion became involved in his life.

Table 3: Central Champion Exposure Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President</th>
<th>Early</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Professional</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ben</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Brantley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Bruce</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Christian</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Keith</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Lewis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Nathan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Raymond</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Simmons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Walters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Williamson</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Through each president’s recounting of their experience with their Champion(s), elements of Albert Bandura’s (1994) four primary means (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and positive mood enhancing) of acquiring self-efficacy were evident in varying degrees and, at times, in various combinations. The results of the presidents’ experiences were aligned with what Whiting (2006) stated was the effect of
those who increased their sense of self-efficacy: the surge of resilience, self-confidence, self-control, sense of self-responsibility, and the belief that they could accomplish all tasks associated with an intended goal.

The Influence of Early Exposure

This section reveals the type of support, guidance, and encouragement that some of the presidents received from their Central Champion prior to going to college. Additionally, this section explores the influence of these relationships on how the presidents viewed themselves, and how they thought about their future.

Dr. Walters, the first in his family to go to college, shared one of the earliest examples of how he was impacted from the championing he received by his first Central Champion. He recalled sitting in church one day reflecting:

...I saw there was something about people who went to church with me who went to college. I didn’t know what that was about. I knew it was something different about those individuals. They would come back and they’d look different. That’s when I said that might be an interesting place to go and when you finish; maybe that’s a logical step to go to college.

Fortuitously, one of those "individuals" lived across the street from Dr. Walters. Although they had never met, when Dr. Walters began to have difficulty with trigonometry while in high school he decided to ask his neighbor for help. Dr. Walters stated:

I was never too big to ask for help. That was one of the things that kind of helped me get through stuff...
It was that initial step by Dr. Walters that led to the development of a relationship with his first Central Champion. Unknowingly, Dr. Walters initiated his first *vicarious experience* with a neighbor who was a college graduate working professionally as a math teacher. Through their relationship, Dr. Walters was transformed and now able to consider new and unexplored options about his future.

Like Dr. Walters, Dr. Keith identified one of his first Central Champions while in high school through his church. Dr. Keith had been interested in becoming a veterinarian and through a church connection met and worked with a veterinarian also from their church for several summers. Through that relationship Dr. Keith was able to gain *mastery and vicarious experiences*, while also experiencing aspects of *social persuasion*. In addition, his experience working with his Central Champion cemented his passion for the craft and became an important driving force that pushed Dr. Keith on to college, and encouraged him to have a plan once there so he would one day become a veterinarian. Dr. Keith shared:

> I wanted to be a veterinarian so I only applied to schools that had a Veterinary School... my thought was you do undergraduate and then do vet school at the same place and be done with it.

For Dr. Keith and Dr. Walters their early exposure to a Central Champion directly impacted their path to college. For Dr. Lewis, his early exposure to his Central Champions may have saved his life and can be credited as one of greatest influences on his success.
As previously discussed, Dr. Lewis’ home situation was not stable. He had attended seven different elementary schools, moved approximately seven times while attending the same middle school, and was briefly homeless during that time period.

For Dr. Lewis, the role of his Central Champions was different from that experienced by Dr. Walters or Dr. Keith. Because Dr. Lewis spent so little time at each of his elementary schools he mentioned several individuals who influenced him and helped shape his educational identity and connect him to school while everything else around him was in turmoil. Dr. Lewis recalled:

I went to third grade at Waters. I know that...because school was always the one place where I felt safe... It’s where my teachers showed that they cared about me and understood some of the things I was going through.

I can remember teachers at Waters who were just very influential. I had a White principal who was there who always took an interest in me and made sure I had certain opportunities. I can remember going to another school and there being a teacher who knew someone in my family and so she would watch out for me there. She was a music teacher, I didn’t even take her class but she was just always there for me. Her name was Ms. Wood. In all of my elementary schools, I sort of had someone who would watch over me. School has always been formative for me as far as that experience. It’s sort of where I feel like I grew up versus growing up in a neighborhood.

Later sharing:

School was, for me, like an escape. It was the one place I could go and it didn’t matter if I could eat at night. It didn’t matter if I was sad when I got home. It didn’t matter if my mother wasn’t at home at that time or if she was, or if she was there and things weren’t right. It [school] was that one consistent thing in my life.

The impact that Dr. Lewis’ teachers had on him is clear. When asked why he
thought so many of his teachers and principals championed for him he responded stating:

I think they saw, one, that I had a lot of emotional issues, and that I was very smart but had emotional issues. I can remember as early as third, fourth grade trying to commit suicide, so like things like that. They were just genuinely concerned.

In each of Dr. Lewis’ elementary schools and his middle school he was able to pinpoint individuals who nurtured his academic identity and provided him the safety and stability he longed for at that period in his life. Dr. Lewis, unlike Dr. Walters or Dr. Keith, because of his continuous moving and switching of schools, needed to have more Central Champions early on to get him through and to build an alternate identity that he could believe in and develop into. Dr. Lewis’ experience with his Central Champions evolved once he reached high school. There, for the first time in his life, he had a significant level of stability within his school setting and relatively so in his home life. Dr. Lewis identified three specific Central Champions who all came into his life during the 9th grade at his new high school. The first was his English teacher who raised the bar for him academically. She allowed him to stay after school to use her computers to finish his assignments because he did not have one at home, and engaged him in many conversations about his life while providing many life lessons (*positive mood enhancing*). Second was his band director who Dr. Lewis described as being "like a father to me". The third was the principal of his high school who he
also described as being “like a father figure” and one of the men he saw as being very successful (*vicarious experience*).

Dr. Lewis’ success stands in complete contrast to his older brother. The juxtaposition of their experiences is a perfect example of how critical the role Central Champions can be in an individual's life. Dr. Lewis recalled his brother as being very smart and well spoken, but who had a different experience and made some different choices. His older brother spent much of his life in and out of jail struggling for stability. When asked to discuss in more detail Dr. Lewis shared:

He didn’t necessarily have the same experiences I had with my teachers and stuff, but by the time I got to high school, my brother was in jail. I don’t know. We ended up in different places, but also, I think we had different supports and different experiences at the same time. Him being five years ahead of me, we were not in the same schools at the same time. He didn’t have people impacting his life, like when I had a Ms. Wood, he didn’t have a Ms. Wood. He was in a totally different school somewhere else getting something totally different...

When asked to reflect on the impact of his teachers and principals while he was in school, Dr. Lewis shared:

The way I describe it for me, personally, is I feel like they were my angels in a way because I always had someone supporting and encouraging me when I needed it. What I say is that God placed these people in my life at the right moments to give me the things that I did not get at home. For me, it’s almost like a perfect alignment in a way because for every situation I can tell you about that happened at home, I can tell you the corresponding thing that happened at school to counter that...

For Dr. Walters, Dr. Keith and Dr. Lewis the early influence of their Central Champions is unmistakable. Early in their lives they encountered individuals that nurtured them, shaped and provided them a path that
enabled them to develop their sense of self, purpose and direction. With champions in their lives, they were empowered and grew academically and laid the foundation for what they would become professionally. However, the unanswered question is: would any of them have ended up like Dr. Lewis’ brother had their Champions not entered their life?

**The Influence of College Exposure**

Going to college for many young people signifies their coming into adulthood, a new beginning, and an opportunity to discover who they are and the path they will take in life. For some, the transition to college is seamless and for others it is daunting and beset with numerous unforeseen obstacles and barriers. For the presidents in this study their experiences fell along this same continuum. However, for each president who identified obtaining a Champion while in college reported that they were nurtured, shaped, their transition eased, and opportunities provided which guided their journey in ways that were similar to the presidents that experienced Championing prior to college.

Dr. Raymond grew up in the South, the oldest male in a home with five children. His parents divorced when he was ten and at that point his mother essentially made Dr. Raymond the man of the house, providing him a significant amount of autonomy, decision-making ability, and authority. Dr. Raymond recalled:

I basically ran the household. My mom wasn’t there. If my siblings did something, I was the enforcer. I had to spank them. My brother was only two years younger than me, and my sister three, maybe four, but I enforced the rules from a very early age once my parents divorced. I
had to be in charge.

For Dr. Raymond, this situation provided him a strong sense of self and determination. Dr. Raymond attended a public high school which he recalled as having "low expectations" for the mostly all Black student body. Despite the low expectations, Dr. Raymond, through his strong sense of self and determination, was able to separate himself from his peers, and to "do a few things right" which enabled him to stand out in the eyes of many of his teachers. Dr. Raymond shared:

I had many teachers throughout the time who would see something and nurture that...

Despite his success in high school and the support he received, Dr. Raymond recalled not being ready for college.

I would say nothing prepared me for college. I had some, I guess, innate abilities. I could figure it out and I could function, but I knew that I was not ready for college at that time in my life, and academically I was not prepared to succeed at the college level.

Prior to college Dr. Raymond’s sense of self and determination had enabled him to push through adversity. However, once he arrived at college he struggled and it was not until he connected with his first Central Champion that things began to change for him. Dr. Raymond shared:

Dr. Graham was one of the people who had the greatest impact on my life. I was in her class and I raised my hand and I said, “Can I axe a question?” She said, “Young man, you can’t axe me anything. You can ask me a question.” She then said in front of the whole class, she said, “You are too intelligent and too attractive to speak that way,” and that kind of changed my life. I’d never thought about it, the way I spoke. You know, growing up in the South, you speak a certain way and it really made me focus on my presentation, and from that moment, I know I started talking differently. I tried to speak correctly...she
changed my life.

Dr. Raymond continued to share that he would go on to take every class that Dr. Graham offered, developing a long and lasting bond with his Champion, and through that relationship was provided the support he needed to succeed in college. More importantly, Dr. Raymond recalled that Dr. Graham made him believe that “I could do anything (social persuasion).” Additionally, she encouraged him to go to graduate school even though he did not have the best grades at the time. He did go with her recommendation.

Dr. Ben grew up an only child in a family where many of his family members had attended and graduated from college with at least an associate’s degree. He admits that he was only an average student while in middle and high school. He shared that it was not until college that he began to flourish as a student. In part, he credits the fact that he had a scholarship, which required him to maintain a specific GPA. He also credits the campus culture that he described as nurturing and supportive. However, when asked specifically how he was developed by his higher education institution, Dr. Ben credited two specific men that he reports shaped and molded him, and provided the path for his future. The first was Mr. Timms who was the director of the Honors Society at his school. Dr. Ben shared:

Mr. Timms, from the time I got there as a freshman was talking about graduate school and the importance of getting your doctorate. The seed was planted. I didn’t have the vision. You just heard the story a thousand times.
Prior to meeting Mr. Timms, Dr. Ben did not have a clear vision for his future and had not considered getting his doctorate degree. It was only through the on-going relationship with Mr. Timms that the idea began to germinate.

It was through Dr. Ben’s relationship with his second Central Champion, Mr. Cunningham, that Dr. Ben began to identify a clear path for his future. Mr. Cunningham worked in student support services at his school. Although Dr. Ben was not a part of that program, Mr. Cunningham still took Dr. Ben under his wing and provided him an invaluable mentorship. Dr. Ben recalled:

He pushed me into workshops, public speaking, requests for proposals for conferences. My résumé is outlined today in the very same way that he taught me when I was an undergrad. I literally have the same one since the ‘90s. I just put more stuff on it.

Later describing the experience with Mr. Timms and Mr. Cunningham, Dr. Ben stated:

It was not necessarily so much role modeling as role molding. It was them saying, ‘You can be this. You can do this. Let me help you. Let me help shape you to get to that next level.’

The result of Dr. Ben’s relationship with Mr. Timms and Mr. Cunningham in college was that, for the first time, he was left believing “Wow. I can actually be a professor”.

Dr. Brantley, like Dr. Raymond and Dr. Ben, grew up in the South, the oldest of three siblings. His parents were both college graduates who worked as teachers for most of his life. Dr. Brantley was an exceptional student in high school, graduating fourth in his class from a school in its first year of integration. In college, initially Dr. Brantley did not perform as well
academically, but his latent talent caught the attention of his department chair who would become the first of two Central Champions that Dr. Brantley would encounter throughout his time in undergraduate and graduate school.

Dr. Brantley recalled sitting with his department chair:

I told him that I wanted to be an economics professor. This was my sophomore year. “I want to be an economics professor like you are.” “If you do, what’s your grade point average?” “It’s 2.75.” He said, “You need to get serious about your schoolwork and make As and Bs, graduate with honors, take as much math as you can while an undergraduate, and plan to spend quite a bit of time in grad school.” “Okay,” so I went to work on it. From that point forward, rather than just studying and working, I worked specifically to make A’s.

For Dr. Brantley that was a transformational moment that completely shifted his perspective about himself and what he intended to accomplish while in college. Although he had a vision he did not know the steps he needed to take to reach his vision. He went on to share how his relationship with his department chair grew from that experience. The following year Dr. Brantley took his chair’s signature course "Money and Banking" and did so well that his chair hired him as his teaching assistant for the next semester. What makes this truly unique is that Dr. Brantley was attending a Predominantly White University in the south when integration was relatively new, racism was ever-present, and Black students only comprised approximately 6% of the university population at the time. Dr. Brantley remembered:

This money and banking class that I was serving as a TA for had a bunch of White males in it, most of whom were older than I was. This was one semester after I had finished the course, so I had not graduated from college. For him to give me that kind of responsibility and the opportunity was a real booster, a real boost to my self-esteem, my confidence, and I have just grown to appreciate it more over the years. That had a significant impact.
Dr. Brantley’s second Central Champion entered his life when it appeared that his dream of becoming an economics professor was in jeopardy. Dr. Brantley attended another Predominantly White University for his PhD. After the first year of course work students within the program were required to take a preliminary examination to move forward in the program. Dr. Brantley failed. This was the first time he had failed anything. Dr. Brantley was granted a second opportunity to take the exam but again failed. It was at this point that his major professor began to champion for Dr. Brantley’s future. Traditionally, when a student failed their preliminary examination for a second time that student was asked to pursue their studies at another institution. However, as a result of Dr. Brantley’s relationship with his major professor, he was strongly encouraged to petition the department for another opportunity and it was granted. Dr. Brantley passed the exam on his third try and went on to be the fourth in his cohort of forty-five to defend his dissertation. His relationship with his major professor continued to develop throughout his time in the program and was exemplified when Dr. Brantley was applying for jobs and asked his major professor for a recommendation. In that recommendation, Dr. Brantley recalled:

In the letter, he said, "I expect Dr. Brantley to be a dean in 5 years and a president in 15." That planted the seed in my mind. I thought, "Well, maybe I will be a president down the road."

Prior to reading his major professor’s recommendation letter Dr. Brantley had never considered a career outside of becoming an economics professor.
However, almost to the exact timeline, Dr. Brantley would indeed become a dean, and then a university president.

While Dr. Raymond, Dr. Ben and Dr. Brantley all had experiences that shaped and molded them prior to their arrival in college, the impact of their Central Champions while they were in college is clear. Until college, none of them knew who they were as students and none of them had a sense of what they could accomplish. Their Central Champions entered their lives when their focus and sense of purpose in college was either absent or not yet fully formed. Each of them received the championing needed that would push them through adversity and then provide them the guidance and support to make their pathway for future success both clear and attainable.

The Influence of Professional Exposure

While some of the presidents met their Central Champions when they were young, and others when they were in college, there is another group that gained Central Championing once they reached the workplace. For these presidents, their Champions would challenge them professionally, help them make difficult career decisions and advocate for them at critical junctures in their careers.

Dr. Nathan grew up in the Caribbean in a rural farming community, the fourth of six children. Upon graduating from boarding school, Dr. Nathan went on to a local college that was the equivalent to an American community college. Once he completed his degree Dr. Nathan followed the path most traveled by young men in his community and went to work. While working
Dr. Nathan got married and soon had two children. During this period, Dr. Nathan began to get comfortable in his new life, but also began to feel trapped in his career. He knew he wanted to be able to buy a nice car, purchase a home, earn a decent salary, and be respected professionally, but he did not know how to accomplish those goals. Not long after settling in with his young family, Dr. Nathan met his first Central Champion. At Dr. Nathan's job most of the supervisors were men who left the job, went to college abroad, and then came back to their country for higher paying, higher status positions. Dr. Nathan began to spend time with one of his supervisors outside of work and was able to observe his lifestyle and learn how he transitioned back to school and then eventually back to work. Dr. Nathan recalled an extensive conversation he had with his supervisor who stated, "...you know you are not going to get anywhere unless you go and get a degree." That conversation stuck with Dr. Nathan and soon he and the supervisor began to discuss how Dr. Nathan could follow a similar path. The result of their interaction led Dr. Nathan to choose to attend the same university in the United States as did his Champion and also inspired him to go on and obtain his Ph.D., as his Champion had done.

Dr. Williamson, soon after graduating from college, began working for an educational enrichment program for high school students as a reading instructor. While in that position he sought to learn, and master every aspect of the program ranging from student recruitment to budgeting. Not long into the position Dr. Williamson encountered his first Central Champion.
Fortuitously, Dr. Williamson was invited to a dinner where he met Dr. Maker who worked at a university and recently received grant money to start a program at her institution. At the dinner, Dr. Williamson shared his experience working for the educational enrichment program, Dr. Maker was so impressed that she offered him the opportunity to direct her new program. This marked Dr. Williamson's first professional experience in higher education, and through the guidance and oversight of Dr. Maker, Dr. Williamson begin building his leadership portfolio. Dr. Williamson credits Dr. Maker and his experience as the program director for honing his "decision-making skills" and sharpening his understanding of higher education. Dr. Maker would go on to be one of Dr. Williamson's greatest supporters as he progressed professionally through his professional career.

Dr. Bruce, like Dr. Williamson, unexpectedly met his Central Champion in college. He was married with children and serving as a faculty member at a university in the south. One of his children had become close friends with one of her preschool classmates who happened to be the daughter of Dr. Harring, the president of a Historically Black University in the south. Dr. Bruce and Dr. Harring's path began to frequently cross and a relationship developed. Through their conversations, Dr. Harring became aware of Dr. Bruce's achievements as a program development specialist and as a faculty member. Dr. Bruce recalled the day that Dr. Harring called him with a request that would change the direction of his career. Dr. Harring shared that his
university’s college of education had recently run into some scrutiny and that they needed someone who could quickly turn the college around stating:

I need somebody who can come in here and step in as Dean because we've got a short time to fix things.

Up until that point, Dr. Bruce’s only professional goal had been to achieve tenure and to teach for the rest of his career. However, he recalled knowing immediately that he had accept Dr. Harring’s offer and join him as the Dean of the College of Education.

As dean, Dr. Bruce was extraordinarily successful in his new role with the guidance and support of Dr. Harring. Dr. Bruce was quickly able to resolve the issues of the college and was soon promoted to Vice President for Planning and Dean of the Graduate College.

Like Dr. Nathan and Dr. Williamson, Dr. Bruce ’s relationship with Dr. Harring continued long beyond their work together. Dr. Harring would go on to serve as a primary advocate and supporter for Dr. Bruce 's career as he climbed the academic ranks. Although Dr. Bruce had been very successful academically and professionally up to that point, Dr. Harring’s championing changed the trajectory of his career. Dr. Harring saw the untapped potential and promise in Dr. Bruce and through his support provided Dr. Bruce the opportunity to make the most of his talents.

Regardless of the stage of life in which each president encountered their Central Champions, several themes were consistent throughout all three interactions. First, each Champion entered a president’s life around the time of a key transition. Second, the interactions with their Champions
would play a vital role in the future president’s development of their academic and/or professional identity. Third, each president was challenged and pushed by their Champions to explore new aspects of themselves, which expanded how they viewed themselves and what they believed they could accomplish. Fourth, each Champion served a critical role in preparing each president for their transition to the next stage of his life and also helped them in their preparation. Each of these themes were important to the presidents’ academic and/or professional development and fundamental to their cultivation of self-efficacy, and provided the presidents with the necessary knowledge, understanding, and self-belief, needed to navigate the academic and professional challenges they would soon face.

**Preparation for Championship**

In the previous section, the impact of the Central Champion was discussed in detail through the presidents’ life stories. Regardless of the stage of life when each president first encountered his Champion, the influence the Champions had on the presidents' lives was clear. As earlier discussed, the positive influence of effective mentors on young people’s academic and professional outcomes has long been established (Kay, F., et al. 2008; Terrion, J. & Leonard, D., 2007). However, what is less known is what factors enable some to capitalize on the opportunity of mentorship. This section explores the experiences that prepared each president to successfully take advantage of the opportunities offered by their Central Champions. This section reveals commonalities found throughout their early lives and details
the relationship between the Central Championing each president received, and the nine-established reciprocal supporting mechanisms: (1) family, (2) school, participation in activities, (3) enrichment activity participation, (4) esteem and leadership, (5) early academic identity formation, (6) interested and invested adults, (7) peer role models, (8) high school or college leadership, and (9) experience of success.

**Family**

The president’s families were at the core of their identity. Ten of the eleven presidents discussed at varying lengths the influence growing up in a stable, loving, nurturing home environment had on their development. They shared how their home environments had clear expectations, not just on their behavior, but on how they were expected to perform in school. Each shared how the expectations of their home environment influenced their sense of self and their sense of what they could accomplish. This is exemplified by one of Dr. Brantley’s statement:

“They just provided a loving, nurturing home. They didn’t have to tell us to do our homework. They didn’t have to get on us. As I said, when I took a test, my goal was the paper to him and said, ‘Dad, I had the highest score on the math test.’ He said, ‘What did you make?’ ‘A 98.’ He said, ‘What did you miss and why did you miss it?’ He would focus on that, and that would deflate my balloon... It just sends messages that you can always strive to do better. You can always reach for perfection. Don’t feel too good about what you’ve accomplished when there’s always room for improvement.”

The impact of the nurturing of Dr. Brantley by his parents is further echoed in a later statement when he shared:

“My mom said to me early on, I don’t remember how old I was, but she said, ‘You’re going to be a great man.’ That had an impact on me, so I
expected to be a great man. I don’t know that I ever made it, but I certainly didn’t think that I had limitations that couldn’t be overcome, and that there was nothing that I couldn’t do.”

Dr. Keith had a similar experience in his home growing up with his parents:

Both relationships were really good with both parents. ...guys are generally closer to their moms but it’s different though when your dad is a ‘counselor’, they both had a great influence on me in different ways.

My mom was more nurturing depending on the situation, but sometimes she pushed the hardest. My dad always liked to reinforce the positives, and he patted me on the back more consistently.

Dr. Keith said that his parents gave him messages like:

‘You gotta be three or four times as good as White people.’
‘...always do your best, whatever your ability is. Even in undergrad, it was always just do your best.’

Later in his interview Dr. Keith shared the impact his parents had on his thought process:

‘You need to make sure you compete with these folks... so that was a chip on my shoulder.’

It is clear from Dr. Keith’s statements that the interactions with his parents represent the early formation of his identity and his attitude towards his external world. Dr. Keith’s statements symbolized how he saw his external world and his responsibility in it. Additionally, it marked the beginning process for him, as he became aware of his own aptitude as he began to match the messaging from his parents and the success he was experiencing at school. The impact of his newfound awareness then influenced his expectations about how he would perform in school (Multon et al., 1991).
Interestingly, Dr. Bruce also described coming from a very similar nurturing home environment, yet the details surrounding his upbringing were unlike any of the other presidents interviewed.

Dr. Bruce recalled:

‘I think she [his mother] and her sisters made some decisions early on that the family progress was going to be very deliberate. Point, in fact, three of us were selected, from our earliest recollections, as the three that would get to college and do things’.

Dr. Bruce ‘s mother’s and aunts’ decision to become intentional about his and his two cousin’s future influenced how they were treated within their family and the opportunities they were provided. It also had a tremendous impact on his mindset. Dr. Bruce shared:

It [his family's choice] was never not a part of my conscience. Never. I always knew. I didn’t always understand what it was about, but what I knew was that I was supposed to be very smart and I was supposed to do special things. I had no idea what they were, but I understood that as my job. I couldn't get into fights on the playground. Everybody else had to do the fight thing.

Dr. Bruce’s detailed explanation of the influence of his mother’s decision on his thoughts about himself speaks to the power of social persuasion on a young person’s sense of who they are and what they can accomplish.

Throughout the interviews, there were clear messages that ten of the eleven presidents could recall regarding the impact of growing up in a nurturing environment with clear expectations about the importance of academics. Dr. Lewis was the one president that, for much of his life, grew up estranged from his mother and father and spent periods of time homeless.

As a result, Dr. Lewis received an inordinate amount of nurturing and
support from teachers and administrators at a number of the schools he attended and also from several of his friends’ parents.

In various ways, each interviewed president shared how the expectations set forth for them were also reinforced through work, home responsibilities and/or through leadership roles within their church.

Five of the eleven presidents reported having significant work experience prior to college that was encouraged by their parents. The significance of these early work experiences is that they served as early opportunities for the presidents to cultivate the development of *mastery experiences* (Bandura, 1994), providing them with the important opportunity to experience and overcome obstacles through their own resolve. Below are a series of statements that speak to the influence that early work experiences had on the presidents’ development.

Dr. Williamson stated:

I started learning these lessons [responsibility, meeting expectation] from the beginning because at nine years old I had to have a job at the neighborhood grocery store.

Dr. Christian reported:

The values that my parents instilled in me are nothing is worth having if you don’t have to work for it. You don’t look for a handout. When we were old enough we were encouraged to work for money. I think I started really working for money when I was like eight years old...

The reinforcement of values related to responsibility and meeting expectations is clear in the statements expressed by Dr. Williamson and Dr. Christian. The next quote from Dr. Nathan was generated from the interviewer probing him about how his parents reinforced responsibility
within him. While Dr. Nathan did not work for money, he had significant job responsibilities associated with his family’s farm. Dr. Nathan shared:

I use to get up at 4:30 a.m. We had a few goats and a few cows so I would go to the field and tend to the cows. That happened from about age six to about age fourteen...

For the presidents that worked prior to college none of their jobs were short-term and the lessons they learned through their experiences were invaluable. As previously expressed by Dr. Williamson, he began working at age nine in his neighborhood grocery store and stated that the experience there is where he began to learn "who I am as a professional".

Another key influence in the presidents’ early development was the influence of their non-direct care-giving family members. Many of the presidents grew up in homes and communities in which they also closely interacted with grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. Five of the eleven presidents spoke directly to the reinforcing influence these family members had on their lives.

Dr. Christian stated:

My grandparents lived about 15 miles away so we would just go by my grandparents. We learned early the importance of education and the importance of work.

Dr. Simmons, who lived with his mother and uncle, who had his PhD. and was one of the first Black teachers in a newly integrated community in the south, remembered:

He [his uncle] pushed academics because he was the standard. We all looked up to him because he had done so well, and he was the oldest of all the siblings, and he had monetary means from what we saw.
The impact of good elementary and secondary schools on academic outcomes for students has long been recognized (Card & Kruger, 1990). Nine of the eleven presidents attended what they considered an academically competitive elementary or secondary school for at least some period of time. While the presidents’ academic performance varied, having an opportunity to learn in a strong academic setting strengthened their foundation and academic identity. This was never more evident than in the case of Dr. Raymond:

You know what it’s like being a private school kid in a public school. It was a challenge for my mom, I think, and you can definitely see the difference between me and my younger brother, just exposure, experiences. I like to think that attending Catholic school was a great foundation for me. It was a pretty strict environment, and after I left that environment, like fourth grade, I never experienced that again, that level of accountability in school, that level of instruction, and when I got to public school it was like a joke. I remember going from a very structured environment to chaos in my new school. I can recall how out of control I thought the kids were.

Dr. Bruce recalled a similar experience when he switched regions and schools after one of his family’s moves, but in the reverse:

The first real revelation about my capability was when I first got to my new school. The curriculum was so far past what was allowed in the south in things like math because I was a straight A student all my life with no effort. All of a sudden here’s something I can’t figure out how to do.

Dr. Bruce was challenged by his new academic environment and recalled growing a lot through the experience.

Dr. Williamson’s parents also had the desire to give their son the very best education they could. Dr. Williamson recalled:
Being the oldest of six children had a lot to do with it too because the pressure was there to perform, to be accountable, to be responsible, to accept responsibility. Unbeknownst to me, until I was out of college, that was what the expectation was because my parents never articulated that to me. They held me to a regimen. They made sure that I got a good education. I went to Catholic schools through high school.... They knew at that time the best education you could get was in a Catholic school, and we did.

While Dr. Raymond and Dr. Williamson both attended academically competitive catholic schools, Dr. Christian benefited from attending the laboratory school at his local university, stating:

I’ve always been in a university environment. I went to nursery school, kindergarten, first grade through eighth in a laboratory school at the local university.

He went on to share:

Education was everywhere. That was a unique experience for us. The teachers who taught me elementary, middle school, and high school were graduates of the same [local] university.

Ten of the eleven presidents reported being identified as talented students (despite three previously being recommended for special education) by at least one teacher prior to college. For several of the presidents this early identification was life saving; for others it reinforced their identity that had been nurtured at home.

While the majority of the presidents reported having been positively influenced by their communities, all of the presidents spoke of having at least two teachers who had a significant influence on them (several presidents reported having many more) prior to going to college. Each president expressed how these teachers motivated them, pushed them, inspired them, guided them and, in several instances, went well beyond any expected norm
to care and nurture them. The positive influence their teachers had on their early development was universal, but the stories each president shared about their teachers were unique and personal. As previously mentioned, Dr. Lewis was particularly influenced by a number of teachers and administrators throughout his early development. Reflecting back on elementary school Dr. Lewis stated:

I went to third grade at Waters elementary. I know that because I remember things based off of the school...school was always the one place where I felt safe and that it was my community. Really, school was it. It’s where my teachers showed that they cared about me and understood some of the things I was going through. I can remember teachers at Waters who were just very influential. I had a White principal who always took an interest in me and made sure I had certain opportunities.

While the impact Dr. Lewis’ middle school band director and principal had on him was discussed previously in the Central Champion section, Dr. Lewis also was greatly influenced by the history, culture, and structure of his magnet high school, sharing:

At that time they [his high school] had a really rich tradition of achievement, it was a black national school of excellence. I think the most important part for me was that it was a loving and caring environment that also challenged me academically in ways I had never been challenged before. In elementary school I was ahead of everybody and in middle school I did great, but it wasn’t like it was the most challenging experience.

Though the influence that Dr. Lewis’ high school had on his life is clear, and according to him it was the administrators and teachers who truly helped him grow as a student and as a young man. In his interview, Dr. Lewis mentioned over six individuals, ranging from his principal and his band instructor to several teachers that he believed shaped his high school
experience and were instrumental in his development. Dr. Lewis comments about these individuals consumed a significant portion of his interview, below are two of the most telling comments.

My homeroom teacher was another one who was like that as well. She was always very motherly; she was older—one of the oldest teachers. They would not only make sure that I had what I needed as far as books or supplies or things of that nature—if I couldn't afford a book everybody had to read, they would make sure I had it, that type of thing.

The next comment references what Dr. Lewis stated was one of most important life lessons he had ever received. It came from one of his teachers who he used to spend a lot of time with outside of class working on various projects for her. He shared:

I was in Ms. Smith’s office and it was me, Ms. Smith and some other kids in there. She told everybody else they had to go to class and then she told me I could stay, I said, “Ms. Smith, why did you make everybody else leave and I’m able to stay?” I don’t know why I was curious about that, and she said, “You know what Dr. Lewis, life isn’t fair.”

Dr. Lewis would go on to share how these two teachers helped frame his life and how he thought about himself, and that he has stayed in touch with both teachers to this day.

**Participation in Enrichment Activities**

Consistent among all of the presidents was their involvement in enrichment activities through their church, school leadership (which will be discussed in subsequent sections) or in their communities. Enrichment activities are typically regarded as the activities that students engage in outside of their academic pursuits. Each of the presidents engaged in
activities in and outside of their schools that strengthened their identity, built confidence, strengthened their networks, and provided them with opportunities to grow physically, academically and intellectually.

The impact of athletics on young people has long been recognized in research (Danish, et al., 1993). For Dr. Walters, it was no different. Dr. Walters began running track in the eighth grade and immediately began to experience success. For Dr. Walters, who was not involved in any other enrichment activities or leadership through his school (although he was in church), track was transformative. His success strengthened his sense of self and defined the potential he saw in his future. Dr. Walters recalled:

I got a lot of positive accolades from that [track] experience. That’s when I knew I could use this to get me somewhere because that was what people identified me with. I identified that as a positive. People around the community that I grew up in, they reinforced it by saying words of encouragement, saying, “I read about you in the paper and I saw your name in the paper.”

I started hearing that, and then when I moved to the high school in the ninth grade that is when I really started thinking about it. I said okay, now if I’m going to do this I’ve got to stay focused. I’ve got to stay on the right path.

Dr. Lewis’ involvement in enrichment activities was extensive. As previously mentioned, Dr. Lewis’ home life was not stable and, consequently, Dr. Lewis found refuge in school sharing "We would be there (school) at ten, eleven o’clock at night…", and that "If I could have stayed there 24 hours, I probably would have". Dr. Lewis was involved in more enrichment activities than any of the other presidents. He participated in the band, PRIDE, parental drug educator, academic decathlon, debate team, yearbook staff,
NAACP ACT-SO competition, school newspaper, and the International Science and Engineering Fair. When asked what the influence of all of his involvement was, Dr. Lewis shared:

Most of the people that meant the most to me in my life I met in the school setting...That’s more the formative piece, and so they sort of were my family... In some ways, they were a motivator for me.

They were not only the ones who encouraged me... they would hype me up...Even in high school, the encouragement for when I won a gold key for the city fair, when I won state for the fair or went to international or got a scholarship, they were my support system and really were sort of rooting me on. “Okay, do some more.”

Dr. Christian, like all of the presidents, was involved in a number of enrichment activities such as the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, and swim and drill teams. He was the photographer for one of his classes and served as the statistician for his school’s baseball team. However, what was most influential on him were the enrichment activities available to the general public at the local university in his predominantly Black town. Dr. Christian recalled:

You got to participate in all of the cultural events that took place on campus. You got to go to the sporting events. You got to interact with students. When my parents needed babysitters there was someone from campus who would come and sit with us. Education was everywhere. That was a unique experience for us.

Dr. Christian’s experiences on his local university’s campus primed him for college and made it the natural next step. When he graduated from high school his local university was the only institution that he applied to and it was there that his career in higher education began to take shape.

**Activity Participation and Esteem Development**

Six of the eleven presidents reported gaining significant exposure to efficacy building activities through their churches. Their depth of
involvement in church ranged from those who were in church almost every day to those who only attended on Sundays. Regardless to the time spent at church, collectively their statements provide rich data of how their lives were enhanced by their experiences, and the values of their families were reinforced at church.

Dr. Simmons’s experience can be summed up in the following statements:

I was always very involved in organizations in church... When I first joined, after I got initiated, I became the president of our local unit. I had started running the meetings... I think they saw in me things of leadership. I was the youngest person to sit on the parish council...

As a result, it taught you certain skills, leadership development, parliamentary procedures, how to run a meeting. It allowed you to meet other persons that were in the organization at other churches. You were able to meet other African American boys and girls as you grew older.

Dr. Ben similarly felt the impact of his experience growing up in the church. Dr. Ben was a self-described "Church boy" and reported that he and his family spent a significant amount of time in the church throughout the week. Dr. Ben stated that he participated in:

‘Sunday school, Young Folks and Friends Union, Youth Department, skits, plays, oratory, monologues. I played the trumpet. With Holy Miss, we had a full band; guitar, saxophone, you name it. Eventually in high school, I became the junior deacon. I was in charge of collecting the young people’s money.

Dr. Ben went on to explain:

I think if you've read... *Outliers* it is a great book by Malcolm Gladwell, which is so interesting. I was thinking about it Saturday night. Back then, there were always speeches. Always. You had to do your Easter speech, your Christmas speech. You had the Easter play, the Christmas play. You had Youth Sunday every fourth Sunday. Actually, there were lots of opportunities to speak and present and be in front of people,
and so it does develop confidence, projection, public speaking ability—if you were good at it, crowd control—and oratory, depending upon your cadence.

The power and the reinforcing influence of the church were also reflected in statements made by Dr. Walters:

"It was this thing you do. While you’re at church you come as you are. Therefore, there was nobody in there judging you. You’re just all you guys come from the same background. You learn how to speak in church because you participate in plays and you sing in a choir. You learn how to conduct yourself in a proper manner in business and meetings and stuff like that. You pick up all those things without knowing that you’re picking it up and you might need them later on in life. The church was a key for me."

The over-arching influence that the church had on all but one of the presidents was best summed up by Dr. Keith when he reflected upon conversations he had with his wife:

"...because that is the first experiences where people get involved, learn how to talk in front of a group, you know they have a suit."

He went on to say:

"...I think to me that is the foundation, at an early age, I don't know anyone who is twelve years old who are given ten, fifteen-minute speeches in church—everything I did after that was easy, because I had been doing that for a while. By the time I got into college, I had been doing it for a decade and that was nothing and that is still the foundation and all the other things are the layers added on and you learn how to do other things but for me, the foundation was the things I got in church."

Beyond the exposure, the leadership and self-esteem-building activities experienced by the presidents through their churches, a number of the presidents reported having similar experiences as young adults in Black Greek fraternities. Specifically, eight of the eleven presidents reported being members of either Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated, Omega Psi Phi
Fraternity Incorporated, or Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated. The experiences of the presidents through churches and their fraternities serve as what Bandura (1994) referred to as *mastery experiences*, which strengthens an individual’s sense of self, and builds confidence and leadership skills. This is exemplified by Dr. Simmons’s comments:

One, it gave me an opportunity to hone my skills on how to motivate people to do things, to hone my ability to speak. It allowed me to broaden my base of other intellectual brothers who were engaged in similar types of activity on their college campuses.

In addition to the opportunity for the presidents to gain *master experiences* by practicing leadership skills with peers, the presidents also reported having gained significantly by being in close proximity to accomplished peers, what Bandura (1994) referred to as *vicarious experiences*. This is illustrated by Dr. Simmons:

The chapter is a historic chapter. It’s one of the oldest chapters in Alpha, and mostly the power players in this city were in that chapter, so I saw people who were state officers and local city government officials and teachers and deans. Being young, I’m sitting around with these brothers talking, so it gave me exposure to people who were already doing well in their chosen careers. One, exposure and two, it gave me an opportunity to hone my voice, to be able to stand up in a meeting and challenge and speak my convictions. Thirdly, I think it gave me an opportunity too, the exposure to these guys and the voice, but it gave me that support, that bond, of saying if I need a connecting person, someone who’s in that field who can help me, I had that group of individuals and I used that. I did use that.

This sentiment was reiterated by Dr. Williamson:

We learned how to function. The fraternity was good for me, too. That was another kind of exposure because here I was coming into contact with men in all kinds of professions—lawyers, doctors, principals.
And then by Dr. Lewis who spoke on the influence that *social persuasion* had on his perspective of himself:

I think, for me, being around those people, it sort of made me able to see that we can accomplish anything. Just seeing examples of people who’ve done those big things, but they’re just regular people, it demystified a lot of the people who I’d looked at in such a different way. I think that was a change because—you don’t see them in what they are a lot of times, you see them in what they’ve accomplished, and I think in that sense, I got a chance to see a lot of men who were doing positive things and who they are, but also just being able to see men in general.

**High School or College Leadership**

Leadership opportunities at the high school and college levels were another variable that appeared to have a significant influence on the presidents. Ten of the eleven presidents reported having varying types of leadership opportunities in their high schools and/or colleges. The one president that did not was a track star and spent a significant amount of time training in high school and college for his sport. The leadership opportunities experienced by the presidents in high school and college served as another opportunity for them to gain *mastery experiences*, which worked to further bolster their self-confidence and their foundation in leadership.

As previously mentioned, Dr. Brantley had already been recognized within his church as being a "bright student". However, his identity as a smart kid and as a leader was further substantiated by his experiences in the academic setting. Dr. Brantley shared that he was first elected class president in the fourth grade and continued to be elected class president throughout high school. Dr. Brantley recalled, "I was always viewed as one of
the top students and one of the student leaders”. When asked why, Dr.
Brantley shared:

I was smart, got along well with people. I was a student-athlete. I
played football. In high school in the South, that mattered. I played
tennis. I was active in the school. I played in the band. I did those
things that student leaders do and got along with most people. I was
not an arrogant person who’s full of himself. Just involved, I guess.

The heart of Dr. Brantley’s story really took place during his senior
year when he was elected class president of his newly integrated high school.
Dr. Brantley ran against several of his new White classmates and won. His
victory meant he would lead a virtually all White student government and a
racially divided student body. As a result, Dr. Brantley was challenged
significantly that year, recalling, “I don’t think any of us look back on that
year with a great fondness”. He was forced to contend with a host of issues
ranging from post-football game celebrations to the prom. Dr. Brantley
recalled learning a lot and felt that he had been as successful as he could
under the most challenging of circumstances.

Dr. Simmons, like Dr. Brantley, grew up in the south but attended a
predominantly White public high school that had long been integrated. Dr.
Simmons recalled that, around his junior year, he was standing in his school’s
hallway observing the pictures of the senior class president and the principal
of the school that were taken every year. He observed no Black faces.
Motivated by that moment, Dr. Simmons decided he would run for senior
class president despite never participating in his school’s student
government.

Looking back at the experience Dr. Simmons remembered:

When I ran for president it was very clear. There was a White girl who ran against me who had been involved. She was a cheerleader. She had been involved as a junior class officer.

Dr. Simmons continued:

There were some contentions there. The White principal wanted her to win. The White teachers wanted her to win, I think, which may be the reason the Black teachers really helped support the campaign because they really wanted to change what they were seeing happening.

Prior to Dr. Simmons becoming his senior class president, he had already experienced substantial success as an award-winning debater for his school. He also had served as president for his local church unit and was the youngest to sit on his parish’s church council. Dr. Simmons recalled that combination of leadership experiences allowed him to develop his voice and confidence as a leader.

Dr. Ben’s confidence as a leader also began in the church and was further fostered through his experiences as a student leader:

The first year I was President of the Honors College, then Business Manager, SGA Vice President, SGA President, Student Ambassador at Large and ex-officio to the Board of Trustees. That began my interest in higher ed because that’s what I was doing.

Dr. Ben shared a brief story of how the idea of becoming a college professor was validated through presentations he gave as a member of his university’s student government.

The seed was planted. I didn’t have the vision. You just heard the story a thousand times and it wasn’t until I was asked to begin doing conference presentations, workshops, etc. that I began to say, “Wow, I
could actually be a professor. I could do this,”

Although what has been documented represents a small fraction of what was shared by the presidents, the influence is clear and their evolution is unmistakable. Beyond providing them a sense of professional direction, many of the presidents interviewed shared how their schools molded them as men.

Dr. Ben shared:

...State gave me all the social skills, gravitas and study discipline to be successful.

He continued:

It was where I was supposed to go and the people there really grew and developed me. They really did, so I had a great experience there.

Dr. Lewis ran for student government president and lost while in middle school, but chose to continue to participate in his school’s student government every year all the way through college, in positions ranging from class representative to senator. It was not until Dr. Lewis reached graduate school that he finally and successfully became the graduate student body president. Dr. Lewis recalled:

It was a really good way to meet people, number one. I guess that’s probably really big. If you’re going to pledge, you just knew what you had to go do—so that was another sort of unwritten thing—you had to do SGA, and it was a good way to just be involved and travel.

In reflection, when asked about the impact that all of his years working with his schools’ student governments had on him, Dr. Lewis shared:
I don’t think there’s anything I can’t do, so when other people think that there is something that can’t be done, I don’t believe in that. I always try to get people to believe that, “We can do it.” I am always looking for solutions. Either I’m going to do it by myself or we are going to do it together, and people have always just jumped in. I think that’s where (student government) you sort of get a sense that okay, I have the ability to not just do what I want to do but actually bring other people around to do it with me, so that’s how that got cultivated.

**Early Academic Identity Formation**

Common among the presidents was the fact that their academic identity began to be formed at home. Six of eleven of the presidents were raised in homes where at least one parent had a minimum of one year of college. Three of those six had two parents that graduated from college. Beyond their parent’s education, several of the presidents grew up in homes where extended family members lived or frequently visited. Dr. Simmons reported growing up in a home with a mom who was a college graduate and an uncle that had a Ph.D. Dr. Ben, unlike Dr. Simmons, was not raised by any caregiver that had attended college, but lived with two aunts who left home for college. Furthermore, he was raised in a community with several college-bound family members. Having college-educated parents or family members in one’s home, or college bound peers in the home provided tangible role models of what could be accomplished academically. As previously stated, this form of *vicarious experience* is an essential quality in the acquisition of self-efficacy and served as an early influence on the presidents’ academic identities.
Another early influence on some of the presidents’ academic identities was the home structure established by their caregivers. This is best exemplified by the experience of Dr. Nathan:

I would say most of us were driven by education. We were forced to learn because we were accountable to our parents, because our parents, though they never went to college, insisted on studying, reading. In those days, we were driven to read constantly and to do mathematical problems in our heads.

Dr. Keith’s speaks to the important role home structure had on academics and the role it played in his, and his brother’s, life:

...so, since they both worked, we got home before they did. We had the keys, we come in the house, we did our work and then because you do it on your own, usually by the time they got home I was outside playing. We played outside every day. But it was sort of like you know what you have to do when you get home. The first thing you do is you get your homework done.

Beyond the influence of a home’s values and structures on the presidents’ development of their academic identity, several of the men also shared the influence of their community’s messaging on their identity. Dr. Ben, who reported growing up in a close-knit community, exemplified below how his community’s messaging impacted him:

It was very important and you have to be a steward, you’re responsible. We saw education as a possession of which man could not be robbed. If you get it, you got it, and no one can take it from you. They (the lessons of the church) were very good, the church encouraged us to respect the church, get good grades, bring your report cards back and to stand up and be heard...

The importance of being a steward, as expressed by Dr. Ben’s community, is evident in all of the decisions Dr. Ben made regarding how he chose to live his life. He continuously chose to serve his school community serving in
various capacities from elementary school to college. Then, in choosing a career he again chose to be a steward serving students in the roles of professor up to the level of college president. In each of his capacities he tried to enrich the experiences of those he served.

**Interested and Invested Adults**

While Dr. Lewis had a significant number of experiences with his school’s administrators and teachers, as previously documented, all of the presidents reported similar interactions with their schools to varying degrees. Each president could identify teachers and/or administrators that they felt went above and beyond their required jobs to invest, nurture, and guide them. These men and women took an interest in the presidents and made sure they were provided with opportunities. Most importantly, presidents had at least one administrator or teacher that pushed them academically and stretched their sense of self and what they could accomplish. While it may sound like the Central Champion is being described again, there are two key distinctions between interested and invested adults and Central Champions. First, the duration of the relationship between a president and the interested adult is significantly shorter. Second, the function of the relationship was generally more advising in nature than championing related. Despite the differences, the influence of the relationships with interested and invested adults was, at times, just as profound and impactful.
Dr. Williamson disclosed that when he was in elementary school he was not the best student. He imparted that if anyone were to go back and look at his grades that they would say, "How the hell did he get through there?" Dr. Williamson thought that he did not apply himself and that he only tried to do the minimal amount of work needed. He remembered that his perception of himself academically began to shift because of the continued effort of Sister Mary Elle who would consistently demand more from him. Dr. Williamson revealed:

Yeah. She insisted that I stop shucking and jiving as an academic, and that's why she leaned hard on me because she knew that I had the capacity and I just farted around. I didn't apply myself and didn't study.

While Dr. Williamson did not become an A student as a result of Sister Mary Elle's effort right away, her words let him know that people were paying attention and that they cared, while also serving to encourage him to try harder and apply himself more. Dr. Williamson began to grow academically every year from that point on.

One of Dr. Simmons's greatest motivators was his American government teacher, who also served as his debate coach. Dr. Simmons recalled a time in high school when they had been practicing for the upcoming Model United Nation competition. His coach began to tell the other students:

“This is my prize student. You all should be like Dr. Simmons, he's going somewhere”. He always wanted me to come by and let his ninth graders, tenth graders see me and would say, “This is how you all should be acting, like this guy.”
The affirming words of Dr. Simmons’s debate coach served as a tremendous motivator for Dr. Simmons to work harder and further cemented his academic identity.

In high school, Dr. Christian was like most of his peers, unsure of what he wanted to study in college or what he wanted to do with his life. However, for Dr. Christian that all began to change with one teacher:

My high school science teacher is still alive and probably had the greatest impact on me as a person. He really understood science, and in our school we didn’t have the best equipment, but we knew what we had to do. The standards [by his science teacher] were set and we had to meet those standards.

Dr. Christian and his science teacher would spend a considerable amount of time together in class and out. His science teacher was also the high school baseball coach, and invited Dr. Christian to serve as statistician for the baseball team. Dr. Christian 's relationship with his high school science teacher fueled his passion for science and baseball. Science was Dr. Christian’s academic concentration from his B.S. to his PhD.

As previously discussed, Dr. Lewis, unlike any of the other presidents, did not have stable family support while growing up. Nevertheless, he was fortunate to have a number of teachers, administrators and “random strangers” that supported, guided, and took an interest in his success. Once Dr. Lewis had completed high school a “random stranger” helped him fulfill his dream of going to college when that possibility was in doubt:

I did this ACT-SO competition with the NAACP in the summer right before going to college. I won the college fair competition and I got a computer, some money, and they listed my name and intended college on a board. This lady (Mrs. Scott) comes up to me asks me about
college and this is how I think things are just so God-driven. I told her that I didn’t know if I was going to go because I didn’t have a way to get there. I can’t say what she saw in me, but two weeks later this lady who I did not know from scratch literally rented a car and took me to school. My family watched her put me in a car and did not give her any money. She drove me down there and she helped me move in, helped me with financial aid because I hadn’t done my FAFSA, and helped me with my housing because I didn’t know, as a first-generation college student, how to do any of it.

Once Mrs. Scott left, Dr. Lewis was again without the support that had helped him succeed thus far. However, Dr. Lewis identified a number of adults at the college who helped him navigate his new academic environment. Dr. Lewis shared his experience with one specific administrator who really stood out to him while he was an undergraduate student:

I mean I had very caring professors. I had very caring administrators. In fact, I was down at college and I saw Dr. Walton who was in the provost office at one point. I could go to Dr. Walton and she would help me through anything and when I went back, I just said, “Thank you.” I wouldn’t have been able to make it through college without those supportive people.

While neither Mrs. Scott nor Dr. Walton fulfilled the role of Central Champion for Dr. Lewis, they were an instrumental part of his development. It is clear from Dr. Lewis’ statements that he believed he would not have gone to college, or succeeded in college, if it had not been for Mrs. Scott or Dr. Walton.

Three themes were evident in this section regarding how the presidents’ exposure to “Interested and Invested Adults” helped prepare them for their relationships with their Central Champions. First, the presidents learned how to develop trusting relationships with adults outside their family. Second, the relationships prepared them to receive help. Lastly,
the relationships challenged the presidents to think bigger about themselves and what they could accomplish.

**Peer Role Models**

Maybe as significant as the importance of having interested/invested adults in the lives of the presidents, was the influence peer role models had on the presidents as they grew up. All eleven presidents reported having peer role models that positively influenced their lives. Bandura (1994) established that having others who are successful and similar to you in one's life (mentor and role models) was an essential element in the development of self-efficacy, explaining that having tangible examples of success leads individuals to believe that they, too, can succeed in a similar fashion. The presidents’ exposure to their peer role models occurred in school, church, and in their communities.

Regardless of where the interaction first took place, the impact on the presidents was just as meaningful. As previously discussed, for some of the presidents, their families’ higher educational experience played a significant role in influencing their thoughts and providing motivation about college. However, what was not discussed was the influence their peers had on their thought process and the role their peers played in influencing the presidents to make the decision to go to college. This was evident in Dr. Walters’ previous statements about observing “something different” about his peers who left his community for college and returned to their church. Dr. Walters stated that he “didn't know what that was about”, but the difference intrigued
him and served as the impetus for him to begin considering college as the next step.

In response to being asked how he learned about college, Dr. Nathan shared:

Friends, after graduating from a school called the School of Agriculture... Most of the guys went there when they graduated. They worked for two or three years and then went on to college, most of them to the U.S., U.K. and Canada so they would come back and ask me why are you working here, why don't you go on to college? It's then I decided to go to college.

Dr. Williamson similarly expressed the impact of peers. Talking about his closest friends when he was growing up in a working-class neighborhood in the Mid-West during the 1950’s:

There were six of us [referring to his closest friends], and, interestingly, we all went to college. Three of us finished.

What is interesting about Dr. Nathan’s and Dr. Williamson’s stories is that they came from homes where neither their parents nor their closest friends’ parents had attended college. However, Dr. Nathan and Dr. Williamson, and a significant number of their closest friends, would choose to go to college.

Dr. Lewis met his peer role model while involved as a 9th grader in his high school’s student government. At the time, the student government president was a male senior with whom Dr. Lewis developed a relationship. Dr. Lewis recalled first thinking:

Oh, wow. They have boys that are SGA presidents, because it wasn’t in my psyche, you know?

However, he remembered by the end of the year:
I saw him and other men in those classes who were before me. They would have this senior awards day. You would see all of the graduating seniors and everybody would go, but it would be for the seniors to be recognized for their scholarships and hard work. When I saw those seniors getting those scholarships and I saw the SGA president getting a full scholarship to go to Emory, and other people getting the MLK Scholarship, the Coca-Cola scholarships, and all those things, that’s when I think I first said to myself, "I want to have that when I graduate".

This was ninth grade. Just seeing that made me like, “Whatever they’re doing to get these scholarships, I want to do that too,” because before that I don’t ever think I even thought about college in that way. It just wasn’t a pressing thing on my mind.

The impact of that award ceremony and seeing his peers presented numerous scholarships transformed Dr. Lewis in that moment and was exemplified three years later when Dr. Lewis sat in the same auditorium as a senior. Dr. Lewis would graduate with over $600,000 in scholarship money. He received several awards and was accepted to his first choice for college.

**The Experience of Success**

Shared throughout the stories provided by the presidents was the importance of experiencing success in big moments. These moments were transformational to the presidents’ identities and their thoughts about what they could accomplish. For some, the moments were thrust upon them; for others, the moments simply came as a result of their circumstances. When the presidents successfully rose to the occasion there were long-term positive implications on their development.

The shifting of the presidents’ sense of professional identity was a common theme among them. None of them initially sought to be a president,
nor believed that it was a part of their professional trajectory. However, in each of the examples provided in this section the “big moments” marked a critical transition in their path that would begin to align them with their future career path.

Dr. Walters was an athlete and had never really focused on what he could accomplish academically. However, Dr. Walters’ life and his sense of self would shift after an injury during his sophomore year of college:

Something happened to me in my sophomore year in college. I got an injury. I had this thing when I was going to college that in my mind I was going to the Olympics. You’re on a full scholarship, you’re competing at Division I level and you got this confidence that you’re going to win, that you can beat anybody. If you train hard, you work your butt off, you can do anything.

Dr. Walters reported that the injury was devastating for him:

I literally sat in the room when the doctor told me. He said, “I don’t know if you will ever be able to run again.” I just cried like a baby. It just killed me because I was that committed to it. That’s when I said hey, I better get something else, get my mind right, wrapped around this thing. That’s when I really got into school.

Later, Dr. Walters would go on to share the lasting impact of his transition to academics:

I’ll never forget it because that semester was my first time breaking the 3.0 mark. I still have my transcript. I think I had like four B’s and one A. I said wow, I like this. They were in competitive courses, too. It was almost like God saying I have to stop you and get you focused on the right thing.

While the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. marked one of the most tragic days in United States history, it served as the impetus for Dr. Bruce’s early exposure to leadership and transformed his identity. To that point, Dr. Bruce shared, “I never sought it. I never sought leadership in
college...”. When Dr. King was murdered, Dr. Bruce’s campus was in upheaval. The students and administrators were looking for individuals who could articulate the issues and provide guidance. Dr. Bruce had become known throughout campus because of a very successful student newspaper he and another student had started and his ideas and perspectives had become known through a variety of meetings and conversations he had with students and administrators. When the university organized a campus-wide discussion on Dr. King’s death, Dr. Bruce was tapped as the student speaker. The opportunity propelled him into leadership. Later, Dr. Bruce served as his institution’s representative as he helped students from neighboring colleges conduct campus lock-downs in their respective administrative buildings.

As previously discussed, when Dr. Raymond was about ten, his parents divorced and, as a result, Dr. Raymond was thrust into the role of the man of the house. He was permitted governance over his siblings by his mother and had the ability to discipline his siblings when appropriate. That experience provided Dr. Raymond a strong sense of self at a young age. However, his confidence in his intelligence and ideas was really honed through his relationship with his father, aunts, and uncles. Dr. Raymond described his family as "old-school", recollecting that children "didn’t talk unless they were spoken to”. But, Dr. Raymond never fit that mold:

I would stand up for myself. I had to back down because I was young, but I didn’t take a whole lot of mess from them, ever. I would just speak up.
Dr. Raymond remembered at age twelve or thirteen intentionally using words that his father could not understand and that it infuriated his father. Over time, several family members began to have issues with Dr. Raymond’s intellect, but the success of being able to intellectually compete with adults at a young age led him to believe in himself:

I am smart. I knew it. I just knew it. No one had to tell me.

The impact of experiencing early success was never more evident than in the life of Dr. Brantley. As previously shared, Dr. Brantley had always been recognized by his peers as a student leader, not just because of his grades, but because he was involved in a lot of school-related activities. He disclosed that he was primarily an A student throughout elementary and secondary school and eventually graduating fourth in his newly integrated high school. Consequently, Dr. Brantley would be elected class president fourth grade through his senior year, despite, as he recalled:

It’s not that I was seeking leadership. I don’t remember campaigning, so I think it was really more of a reflection of how students in the class viewed me.

**Conclusion**

This study provides a detailed picture of how a group of academically and professionally successful African American male college and university presidents were nurtured, supported, and encouraged by their families and their environments to flourish. There were eight important outcomes from this study that provide an overview of the results. There were also five
specific themes that emerged that detailed specifically how the presidents’
efficacy was developed.

**Eight Outcomes**

First, growing up in home environments where the presidents’
psychological, physical and safety needs were met, and their need to be loved
and experience a sense of belonging was met, provided a foundation for all of
them to vigorously begin exploring their worlds. Most of the presidents’
families went one step further and established varying structures that valued
education. While the combination of these factors had an unpredictable
impact on each of the presidents’ academic outcomes while in elementary
and secondary school, it did serve as the underpinning to everything each
president would go on to accomplish. The one exception to this finding was
Dr. Lewis whose home structure was volatile. However, Dr. Lewis did
experience an inordinate amount of support at almost every stage of his life
from his schools and community.

Second, it truly took a community of family members, teachers,
administrators, church members, neighbors and/or strangers to help each
president succeed at critical junctures in their journeys. Although some of
the presidents had more community support than others, the influence of the
support experienced by each of them was important. The community is
where Dr. Lewis’ psychological, physical, safety and love/belonging needs
were most consistently met. For other presidents, this relationship often
reinforced messaging from home, strengthening their sense of self or was
instrumental in supporting the presidents through challenges outside of their home environment.

Third, the importance of extracurricular activities in the lives of the presidents cannot be understated. Whether at school, in church or through community participation, these activities kept the presidents engaged, reinforced their identities and provided them the opportunity to expand their sense of self. More importantly, many of the extracurricular activities provided the presidents an early opportunity to develop leadership skills (generally in school and church), which in turn worked to cultivate their esteem and efficacy. Additionally, involvement in various extracurricular activities often allowed the presidents to develop relationships with peers that they could emulate and seek guidance from.

Fourth, the opportunity to experience success, academically and in the leadership opportunities associated with extracurricular activities, further cultivated the presidents' self-esteem and self-efficacy. Furthermore, the success experienced by the presidents led them to seek more success. Over time, with the continued success experienced by the presidents, an efficacious identity began to form for each of them. They began to believe that, because they had been successful, they should be successful and more importantly they expected to be successful in the future. The presidents' early experience of success would serve as the foundation for their self-actualization experiences later in their lives. This revelation occurred at different points in their lives, ranging from secondary school to graduate
school. Regardless of when their efficacious identity was formed, the point of conception gave birth to their understanding of what they could accomplish, if they applied themselves.

Fifth, there was a point in each of the presidents’ lives when they realized they could be successful, but it was not until they met their Central Champion(s) that they were provided the guidance, support, mentoring and direction they needed to bring their new sense of self completely to fruition. Some of the presidents met their Central Champions while in secondary school, others in college and for some it was not until they reached the workplace. Despite when a president’s Central Champion entered their life, their Champions would help drive the president’s academic studies, steer their early career choices, and provide the encouragement necessary to truly believe in themselves and in what they could accomplish. Ultimately, the presidents relied on the support of their Central Champions to help them negotiate the complexities of their academic and professional lives.

Sixth, as the presidents’ lives progressed in association with the documented outcomes above, very clear patterns of the fostering of self-efficacy can be seen throughout their lives. Bandura shared four primary means in which one may acquire self-efficacy: positive mood enhancing, mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion (Bandura, 1994), each of which is documented repeatedly throughout this chapter within each stage of the presidents’ lives. Each president experienced failure and struggled at varying points in their lives. However, they all had stories of
individuals (parents, teachers/administrators, church members) who taught them how to cope \textit{(positive mood enhancing)}. Each president identified numerous examples of how their resolve was cultivated because they were permitted to engage in \textit{mastery} experience-related activities at home, in churches, at school and through leadership opportunities associated with various extra-curricular activities. Each president identified several peers at church or school that shifted their thoughts about what they could accomplish and inspired them to seek more for themselves \textit{(vicarious experiences)}. Each president identified numerous people, ranging from parents, to family members, teachers, and administrators, who told them they were special and led them to believe through encouragement that they could accomplish what their hearts desired \textit{(social persuasion)}. What made each president’s relationship with his Central Champion(s) so special was that often their self-efficacy was promoted through all four means as a result of this important relationship with his Central Champion.

Seventh, there appears to be a clear relationship between each president’s level of academic self-efficacy and their academic achievement. Generally, self-efficacy applies to an individual’s overarching sense of self. However, for each of the presidents, it was clear that their self-efficacy was developing at various rates in relation to different aspects of their lives. Academically, the performance of each president fluctuated throughout elementary school (two presidents were designated special education for a period of time and a third was referred to special education), secondary
school and through college. There were many points throughout this period where the presidents could have assumed they reached their academic pinnacle or that they had peaked in their academic ability. However, for a host of reasons, each president persisted and by the time they reached graduate school their level of academic self-efficacy began to not just level out, but their academic performance began to align with their true ability.

Eighth, there was no relationship between the presidents’ GPA and their professional success. As discussed, the presidents’ GPAs varied throughout their time in school until they reached graduate school where their academic performance became consistent. There was, though, a relationship between the presidents’ degree attainment and their professional success. Each of the presidents earned the doctorate degree. The importance of this achievement in the pursuit of their professional success was best summed up by a conversation Dr. Walters recalled having with one of his supervisors early in his academic career:

The provost came into my office and he said, “Dr. Walters, if you want to stay in this business and if you want to move up in this business, you need to go back and get your union card.” I said, “Union card? What’s a union card?” He said, “Your doctorate, and you don’t need to worry about where. You just need to go get it.” He said, “As long as it’s an accredited program, because at the end of the day when you finish it, they’re going to say Dr...

As stated by Walter, the “union card” was a prerequisite for each of the presidents to advance through the ranks of higher education, as none of the men made it to the upper echelons of higher education prior to obtaining their doctorate degree. The doctorate degree represents a key to a door of
opportunity that would not otherwise be open to the vast majority of Black professionals and served as an essential professional milestone for each president in this study.

While the home structure, life experiences, and academic outcomes varied greatly between each president, there remained clear themes that emerged throughout their lives. These themes provide understanding of what propelled each president on to their academic and professional success. These themes have the potential to provide invaluable insight into how parents, schools and communities can better support today's young Black men.

**Five Efficacy-Developing Themes**

While there were eight clear outcomes that emerged from data collected, five of them spoke directly to how the president’s early academic and professional efficacy was established. The five themes were:

1. **Home Environment** - A safe and nurturing home is critical in establishing a foundation for growth
2. **Community** - It truly takes a support system of often uncoordinated efforts of individuals to provide opportunity and to foster success
3. **Extracurricular Activity** – Involvement in structured activities after school, in church or through community work to strengthen the sense of self and self-esteem, develops leadership skills and often provides role models
4. **Success** - Being successful builds self-esteem, but more importantly it spurs the desire for even greater success and spurs others to take notice
5. Central Champion - The role of the Central Champion cannot be underplayed in relation to success. Finding someone who wants to see you succeed as much as you want to succeed and is willing to do what needs to be done to encourage your success is essential in overcoming significant life obstacles and barriers.
While each of the five themes represents a distinct segment of each president’s life, the themes themselves are symbiotic in how they fostered efficacy within the presidents. The interactions between the themes varied for each president, however the role they played did not (with the exception of Dr. Lewis, which will be discussed). For many of the presidents interviewed their communities (neighborhood, school, or church) kept them safe, provided them guidance and opportunities. Often, the individuals within the president’s community surfaced as the direct result of their involvement in extracurricular activity. However, on occasions, support came from
strangers they randomly encountered within their extended community, often as a result of their initial successes. This was best exemplified by Dr. Lewis who, as previously mentioned, had been accepted to college, completed the necessary paperwork for enrollment, and had the scholarship money to pay for it, but still did not believe he was actually going because he did not have the means to get there. Dr. Lewis’ dream of going to college could not be realized until he had a chance encounter with a stranger at one of his extra-curricular activities. Once in college Dr. Lewis would do exceptionally well academically and in his involvements on campus. Dr. Lewis quickly established a new community of support who would go on to play an essential role in his development and in his preparation for life after college.

Dr. Lewis did not have the home environment of the other presidents, but he had one of the strongest support systems (community) and consequently, was able to find a safe, nurturing environment at school that compensated enough for what he lacked at home and, thus, was essential to his further development. His community was made up of a host of administrators and teachers who saw his potential and, often in an uncoupled effort, sought to push Dr. Lewis towards opportunities for achievement. This meant that they looked out for him, cared for him, filled identifiable voids, spent extra time with him, provided him opportunities in and out of school that would develop his talents and self-efficacy. Dr. Lewis’ involvement in specific extra-curricular activities such as SGA led him to
encounter his first Central Champion. It was this Champion that first inspired him to want to go to college and then showed him the path he would need to take to earn the scholarship money needed to pay for college. With newfound direction Dr. Lewis performed exceptionally well academically. His extra-curricular involvement did not go unnoticed by members of his support system, who then encouraged him to participate in a number of academic competitions, including the summer academic competition that led him to actually gain entrance to college. It was his success at that competition that inspired a stranger to want to learn more about him, to support him and to be a part of his support system. Without her, Dr. Lewis was not going to college. However; with her in his life he had a means to get to college, literally, and it was there he developed an extended community, a process that would repeat itself again and again with each step building from the previous step.
While there are unique aspects to Dr. Lewis’ story, how the five themes conspired in the early development of each president’s academic and professional efficacy was very similar.

Dr. Keith, unlike Dr. Lewis was raised in a very strong and nurturing home environment. His parents invested a lot of time in the development of his character and spirituality, and laid the early foundation of his academic identity. When a teacher recommended that he be enrolled into special education class because of difficulties he was having, his parents fought for him to continue to be mainstreamed. Dr. Keith's parents consistently
brought him to church, expanding his support system and encouraged his involvement in the choir and the church’s youth group. Eventually, Dr. Keith would run for and win the presidency of both youth groups. The influence of Dr. Keith’s early exposure to leadership would persist for his entire life. In reflection, he shared, leadership was “just part of who I was as a person” and served as the impetus for him to begin running for class president in the 8th grade. Beyond the leadership experience Dr. Keith was also exposed to his first Central Champion at church. While Dr. Keith more than likely would have been college bound because of his parents’ influence, his Central Champion provided him the exposure and a clear path to his major that his parents could not have. Dr. Keith, like Dr. Lewis, found an extended community once he reached college and like Dr. Lewis this process repeated itself several times for Dr. Keith.
Figure 8: Dr. Keith’s Early Academic & Professional Efficacy Development Pattern

For each president in this study a very similar diagram could be developed representing the interaction between their Home Environment, Community, Extracurricular Involvement, Success, and Central Champion. While the pattern of interaction would vary between the categories based on each president’s life story, the categories themselves would not. Dr. Lewis is the lone exception. As previously documented, Dr. Lewis benefited significantly from not just having several Central Champions but also from a highly supportive school community that when coupled together, compensated to a degree for what he lacked in his home environment. The diagrams above with their categories and coinciding interactions provide a
visual explanation of these varying relationships, ultimately showing how each president’s academic and professional efficacy was developed.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION & SUMMARY

This dissertation began with a conversation regarding the considerable academic and professional challenges that many African American males have had to contend with throughout their lives. The discussion was positioned within a larger body of statistical indicators and trend data that in their totality depicted a bleak and challenging reality for a significant number of African American men beginning as early as their elementary school years. However, unlike much of the existing literature, this study was not about the challenges that beset African American boys and men. Instead, this study sought to understand the themes and patterns of a population of highly successful, academically, and professionally, African American men. The African American male college and university president became the focus with the intention of understanding these men and the supports that helped them become achievers. More importantly, it was how the results could inform current research and practice centered on the success of African American males.

The journey into the lives of eleven African American male college and university presidents began with a dialogue that builds upon two well-established constructs: self-efficacy and cultural ecology theory. Both conceptual tools provided useful concepts with multiple facets. Nonetheless, they were merely the starting point for this particular line of inquiry. Through this process a third concept emerged, the role of the Central
Champion. The Central Champion construct is embedded in a larger theoretical framework that informs our understanding of how environmental, behavioral, and personal factors interact to shape and influence the identity, aspirations, and behavior of successful African American males. In fact, the relationship between the three influencing factors is multi-directional with each factor influencing the other; working together to create shared and individualized experiences. When applied to the data collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviewing (a qualitative inquiry strategy) of the eleven presidents, a much more representational picture of their early life experiences was revealed as the foundation for future endeavors and success.

While Chapter 4, provided an outline of the results, which were then compared to the original research questions; Chapter 5 will delve even deeper into the findings to identify any discernable meaning and discuss the implications the study may have on research policy and practice. Lastly, this study will conclude with closing statements that will detail all significant findings and suggestions for enhancing research around the cultivation of self-efficacy within African American males.

**The Results and Their Connection to Existing Knowledge**

This study examined the bi-directional relationship between environmental, behavioral, and personal factors, and how they interacted to shape and mold each president’s unique experience. Highlighted throughout Chapter 4 were the relationships, the activities, and the moments that each
president believed had the greatest influence on their growth and
development personally, academically, and professionally through ten key
identifiable supporting mechanisms:

- Family
- School
- Participation in school activities
- Enrichment activity participation
- Esteem and leadership
- Early academic identity formation
- Interested and invested adults
- Peer role models, high school, or college leadership
- Experience of success,
- The Central Champion

These ten sources of support were found consistently enough throughout the
presidents’ testimonials that clear patterns emerged, with the most salient
patterns clearly indicating how indispensable the role the Central Champion
was in the growth trajectory of each president.

Yet, to even begin dissecting each president’s life, the study began
with three research questions:

a. Did self-efficacy play a significant role in each African American
college president’s life?

b. What is the relationship between each president’s level of self-efficacy
and academic achievement?
c. What is the relationship between a president’s level of academic achievement and their professional success?

These three questions were used to develop the semi-structured interview protocol used in this study. The interviews were designed to delve into every aspect of the presidents’ early life to reveal nuances of their childhood that enabled them to overcome academic and professional obstacles and to thrive in both environments.

Once the data were gathered through the interview process, Spradley’s ethnographic analytic method was used to unravel, code, and develop identifiable themes throughout each president’s life. As the researcher, I then attempted to focus on analyzing each identified domain, and then to isolate them into the ten specific mechanisms (Family, School, Participation in School Activities, Participation in Church and Enrichment Activities, Early Formation of Academic Identity, Peer Role Models, Interested and Invested Adults, Obtained Leadership Position, Experience Success, and the Central Champion) detailed above. While each category represented a specific segment of the presidents’ lives, each category also enabled distinct new knowledge to be drawn from the significant amounts of data collected throughout the interviews.

Using Spradley’s method, specifics about each president’s academic and professional efficacy began to be identified through the aforementioned ten categories. Specifically, a multi-directional, reciprocal relationship between categories surfaced via this analysis. While every president did not
have experiences that specifically matched each category (the fewest was nine presidents in one category), enough of the presidents could be associated with each category that clear points of distinction were established pertaining to how their early academic and professional efficacy was developed.

Chapter 4 concluded with a listing of eight outcomes derived from the research, five of which spoke directly to how the presidents’ early academic and professional efficacy was established. The five themes were: Home Environment, Community, Extracurricular Activities, Success, and the Central Champion.

Having the ability to identify five core areas that are essential in the cultivation of self-efficacy and the fostering of successful young African American men represents indispensable new knowledge. Every parent and interested professional can begin to use this framework to help focus their efforts in support and encouragement of young people.

**Revisiting the Research Questions**

Building upon the summary of the study provided above, it is important to revisit the three research questions to ascertain how the findings from this study informed each of the questions. However, rather than focusing on each question individually, the following section focuses on what was learned in response to the questions and what related questions arise as we think about the implications of the findings from this study. The answers to each question are less meaningful in isolation than are the more
nuanced and complex findings that are woven together in response to the initial questions.

This study began with an extensive conversation about the substantial amount of research that has been conducted which focuses on the academic and professional failings of African American men and how little research has focused on highly successful African American men. For far too long the deficit approach to viewing and understanding African American male academic and professional attainment has dominated popular media and research. The deficit approach has been limiting at best and, as previously mentioned, ultimately has failed to produce any visible change in the educational or professional outcomes of young African American males.

Filling that void, Chapter 4 provided a detailed description of how five specific core areas - Home Environment, Community, Extracurricular Activities, Success, and the Central Champion - played an important part in the lives of eleven highly efficacious, successful Black men by providing support and encouragement in their early academic and professional development. As a result, this study now sits as the foundation of success-based research that can be applied specifically to young African American men. Understanding a system of variables that collectively foster successful, efficacious young African American men academically and professionally is imperative. This strength-based approach will require new questions to be asked and will generate new theories to be explored, eventually leading to new answers and, more importantly, the potential/vehicle for new outcomes.
The benefits a child experiences from having grown up in a loving and nurturing home are endless. Ten of the eleven presidents grew up in such homes. Some of the presidents had two parents, others a single parent, and one president was raised primarily by his grandmother. Despite the varying home structures, there were similarities in how they were supported and encouraged. All of their homes were stable with strong, loving familial bonds, and all of their families invested heavily in their children’s education. Future research should explore whether the similarities in how these presidents were raised exists for other groups of highly successful African American men. If an African American child has a stable and loving home, to what extent does that family need to invest in their child’s education to begin fostering the desired academic outcomes?

Family investment in education was one of several means found that cultivated the early formation of each president’s academic identity. Other methods included having a parent or family member who possessed a college degree, community messaging, and a home structure focused on academics. In varying combinations, these processes worked together to encourage and cultivate an understanding of the importance of education. Ten of the eleven presidents reported having a strong sense of the significance of education. The eleventh president did not form his academic identity until college. How African American families from all economic and cultural backgrounds effectively communicate the importance of education to their children must be a priority. What became clear from the research was that, for virtually all
the presidents’ families, formal education was viewed as an essential element their children must have to succeed in life. Hence, each family in their own way attempted to structure their children’s world in a way that would reinforce their beliefs in education. Moving forward, it will be essential to explore how other very successful Black men’s academic identities were formed. What were the multiple means they were exposed to, that conveyed the importance of education and reinforced their identity?

Additionally, understanding that one of the presidents did not come from a home in which his academic identity was actively fostered by his family, research must be done to understand how systems (schools, church, and community) and Central Champions can do a better job supporting the development of academic efficacy of children outside of the home. Ultimately, research needs to focus on how to ground young African American men in the idea that they are students first- before they are athletes, before they are entertainers, and before they believe that a criminal life is a viable option. Young African American men must believe that they will be rewarded for their performance in school, that they can make a better life for themselves and their families, and that their future, in many respects, will be determined by how they perform academically.

The core area of Extracurricular Activities in many ways builds on the presidents’ families’ investment in their education. All of the presidents consistently attended school, and while their grades may have varied, their participation in out-of-school activities did not. All the presidents had
significant levels of involvement in activities at school, in their communities, or in churches. Some were led into activities by their parents. Others opportunities arose because of their academic accomplishments or because of their achievements in other activities (success begets success). Regardless of how they became involved in their extracurricular activities, the influence was the same. Each president reported gaining confidence, making friends, being challenged, and eventually growing from their experiences as associated with getting involved. Even more important is the fact that many of the presidents were introduced to their Central Champion as a direct result of getting involved in extracurricular activities. Through experiences shared by each of the presidents it is clear that significant benefits were gained as a result of them being actively engaged. Hence, several questions come to mind when thinking about the implications for future research. Have successful African American men in other fields also had a high level of involvement in extracurricular activities? If yes, what were the specific benefits experienced? What specific activities have the greatest influence on young African American men? Did these involvements also lead to leadership opportunities? Lastly, have other successful African American men gained a Central Champion through their involvement in extracurricular activities?

One of the essential elements in the cultivation of self-efficacy is that individuals must have the opportunity to experience what Bandura (1996) referred to as Mastery of Experiences, which is developed through one’s
ability to overcome obstacles through one’s own resolve. It is believed that everyone (including children) have an intrinsic need to understand and develop his or her capabilities to influence his or her environment (White, 1959 as cited by Turner & Burke, 2003). All the presidents in this study began to develop *mastery experiences* by getting involved in extracurricular activities and by also assuming leadership. The significance of the presidents’ early leadership experience cannot be understated, and the establishment of leadership as a part of their identity (along with “student”) appears significant. For each of the presidents, their early leadership experience was foundational, building their efficacy, esteem and expanding their vision of what they could accomplish through their own efforts.

Research to determine if there is a relationship between early leadership opportunities and later leadership success should be explored. What is the optimal age for these experiences to occur? It will also be important for research to explore the types of early leadership experiences most directly associated with *mastery experiences*. Lastly, every child may need to be provided with opportunities to lead a group of peers. If they are not afforded such opportunities, are there other activities that parents, schools, churches, and communities can engage children in, to provide them with the same type of *mastery experience* opportunities?

**Implications of the Central Champion Model**

Despite the benefits the presidents gained from their home environments, communities, extracurricular activities, and early successes,
we know from their statements that none of them would have accomplished what they were able to without their Central Champion(s). The results of this study suggest that, for the presidents, four of the five core areas Home Environment, Community, Extracurricular Activities, and Success in varying combinations all serve very important roles in the cultivation of self-efficacy, with an emphasis on personal mastery. If the five core areas are intentionally implemented and mindfully structured in young African American males lives, they may reap unprecedented benefits that will foster and encourage their early academic and professional development as it did in the lives of the presidents in this study. Nevertheless, four of the core areas are precursors and served primarily to enable each president to take advantage of the indispensable role the fifth core area, Central Champion(s) played in their lives.

The Central Champion model suggests that there are three specific domains (Personal, Behavioral, and Environmental) in which the five core areas must occur a priori for optimal results. By doing so, the Central Champion model first differentiates itself from Ogbu’s Cultural Ecology Theory, which is a one-directional and reactive model that failed to account for the role individuals play in determining their experience within an oppressive and hostile majority culture. Moreover, Ogbu’s work, like so much of the existing literature, fails to account for how Central Champions can empower individuals at critical moments with knowledge and opportunities that can move them beyond any barrier.
Second, the model developed in this study distinguishes itself from Bandura’s Social Cognitive theory, which is a bi-directional and reciprocal concept that fails to take into account how environmental factors influence individuals and present obstructions that can appear insurmountable to individuals who do not have a Champion. This section will outline the implications of the Central Champion Model and how personal, behavioral, and environmental factors converge to provide the most holistic approach to understanding the experience of young African American males.

**Personal**

How African American families go about structuring the world of their sons is extraordinarily important and must be purposefully planned and implemented. What has been learned through this study is that home environment is the core of a boy’s identity and serves as the basis for how African American boys will interact and engage with their extended environment. There appear to be three primary means by which the presidents’ families fostered their sense of self: Identity Development, Positive Outlook Development, and Experience Success.

**Identity Development**

Providing a safe and nurturing home where young Black males are provided structure, held accountable, challenged, and encouraged to succeed is foundational. Each president (except for Dr. Lewis) verified how their families sought to ensure they had a base that enabled their identity to develop and their sense of a broader world to expand. Whether it was Dr.
Williamson who shared how his family taught him to “...never take low to anybody” or Dr. Bruce who shared that his mother taught him to “... fear nothing, White folks included”, all the presidents’ had a strong sense of who they were and what they could accomplish. Each president early on was given an operating system of beliefs that sought to embolden them despite often being raised in racist, and/or segregated communities.

While the development of African American male identity will ideally occur within their home environment, the absence of such an environment does not mean that all hope is lost. We know from the testimony of Dr. Lewis that African American male children can be extraordinarily resilient, but even in the most distressed home environments African American boys must be able to find safety, nurturing, and identity within other close-knit structures (such as their schools or churches). It is there where interested/invested adults and Central Champions can have the greatest influence. Thus, it appears that family support, while key, can potentially be supplemented by other structures that have caring and devoted individuals willing to go beyond their basic responsibilities to address the needs of the children they encounter.

*Positive Outlook Development*

Bandura (1994) listed *positive mood enhancing* as an essential element in the cultivation of self-efficacy within individuals. This was evident in the personal development of each president. Research reveals that parents can teach their children to succeed and to learn to cope with
failure, by first providing their children with age-appropriate challenges accompanied with warmth and encouragement as their children attempt to accomplish a given task (Turner & Johnson, 2003). Each president recounted numerous stories regarding how their parents nurtured their positive outlook in regards to their core beliefs about themselves and what they could accomplish at home, through church or school. For example, Dr. Nathan shared how he developed confidence as a young child resulting from the responsibilities he was entrusted with on the family’s farm. His responsibilities on the farm increased with his competence, which resulted in him developing self-reliance in his own ability and his sense of what he could accomplish. Similarly, Dr. Raymond was encouraged by his mother to assume the care of his siblings when she could not be at home. Those responsibilities had a similar impact on him as he developed his voice, confidence, vision, and sense of what he could accomplish.

While there was an essential role that families played in the development of the self-efficacy of the presidents’ by teaching them how to achieve and manage challenges, there became a point in each president’s life when they needed more and another level of guidance was necessary. Frequently, it was at this point that a Central Champion(s) entered their lives and engaged them in positive mood enhancing opportunities that pushed them to new levels. Dr. Brantley’s first Central Champion played a key role in his transition from a marginal college student to an exceptional college student. His second Champion served as his greatest advocate keeping him
in his doctoral program after he twice failed his college's preliminary examination. And Dr. Raymond's Champion helped him redefine himself as a student laying the academic foundation that remained throughout his life. Each president shared similar stories of how they were influenced by their Central Champion(s).

**Experience Success**

Lastly, the importance of young African American males having the opportunity to experience success in as many capacities as possible cannot be understated. All eleven presidents had extensive opportunities to experience significant success at very young ages through a host of activities. For many it was through leadership opportunities at their church or school, and for others it was through their first jobs or athletics. Their exposure to various activities was very aligned with what Bandura (1994) coined *Mastery Experiences*. The importance that *Mastery Experiences* play in the development of young people cannot be minimized. However, Whiting (2006) went one step further arguing that the sense of self that young African American males acquire through the process of overcoming challenges was potentially the missing element needed for African American males to narrow the achievement gap. This was most evident in Dr. Ben's reflection about the time he spent in church where he was always giving speeches and honing his skills:

I think if you've read *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell, it is a great book and is so interesting. Back then, there were always speeches. Always. You had to do your Easter speech, your Christmas speech. You had the Easter play, the Christmas play. You had Youth Sunday every fourth
Sunday. Actually, there were lots of opportunities to speak and present and be in front of people, and so it developed confidence, projection, and my public speaking ability. If you were good at it, you had more opportunity and you could develop crowd control depending upon what your cadence was. Every Sunday you have to know your memory verse when you got to Sunday school, and that was a big thing, to know your memory verse. You do 10,000 hours of that, according to what the plan was, and you’ve got it.

Dr. Williamson, reflecting on all the challenges he was faced with, stating:

All of this evolution and these experiences have served me... I was determined then that I’m not going to be subjected to capricious and arbitrary treatment by anybody. There’s nothing that I want that I would sell myself for.

He went on to observe:

Open up and look in, because unless you are comfortable with that, all of these titles and degrees behind your name mean nothing.

While the opportunity to experience success early in life had a very clear positive influence on each president, it was the opportunities provided by their Central Champions that appear to have had the greatest effect on who they would become professionally. Dr. Bruce's Central Champion believed in him and provided him the opportunity, along with a tremendous amount of guidance and support, to take over as Dean of a struggling College of Education. Dr. Ben was pushed into doing workshops and public speaking engagements, and was encouraged to submit proposals for conferences by one of his Champions, all of which built his identity and his sense of what he could accomplish.

It became clear through the testimonies of the presidents that it is critical early on for young African American males to develop a strong sense of self, and to know that they are talented, strong, and capable of succeeding
at whatever they decide to do, regardless of the obstacles before them. However, equally if not more important, it is essential for African American men as they grow and mature to have all the above attributes reaffirmed and enhanced once they enter college and/or encounter new challenges in their professional careers.

**Behavioral**

As detailed in the previous section, each president’s sense of self is developed through three specific pathways: Identity Development, Positive Outlook Development, and Experiencing Success. Consequently, identifiable normative patterns of behaviors emerged amongst the presidents interviewed that served to protect their sense of self, influenced what they perceived their role to be and ultimately directed them to achieve academically and professionally. Each president shared experiences that they felt nurtured identifiable behaviors in them. Dr. Keith directly correlates his competitiveness to growing up “… in a household of all these high achievers” “…There really is this competition, it’s friendly competition between my dad, my mom and myself…”. Dr. Keith’s competitiveness was then reflected in his choice of friends who were all high achievers. One is a pilot, another is in pharmaceutical sales, one is an attorney for ESPN, and another is a reporter at a major television network.

Dr. Bruce recalled that his confidence was directly correlated with the nurturing he received from his politically conscious and outspoken mother
who made him feel smart, accountable, and unapologetically Black. Dr. Bruce shared:

It was never not a part of my conscience. Never. I always knew. I didn’t always understand what it was about, but what I knew was that I was supposed to be very smart and I was supposed to do special things. I had no idea what they were, but I understood that as my job.

And later shared:

There was never ever a question about our inferiority. We knew. When I hear other people talking about feeling inferior when they saw a color fountain sign, my reaction had been built up to the point where I was always, that’s so stupid.

Understanding what Dr. Bruce’s core beliefs were and how they developed allows us to clearly see the patterns in his later behavior. It then should come as no surprise that he and one of his closest friends would create their predominately White university’s first Black newspaper, and that when the civil rights movement reached its apex at his institution, he was then leading the student movement.

Dr. Williamson remembered growing up feeling a strong sense of responsibility and leadership.

Being the oldest of six children had a lot to do with it (sense of leadership) too, because the pressure was there to perform, to be accountable, to be responsible, to accept responsibility. Unbeknownst to me until I was out of college, that was what the expectation was, because my parents never articulated that to me. They held me to a regimen. They made sure that I got a good education.

Consistent throughout Dr. Williamson’s interview were stories about him accepting a high level of responsibility for his job and his role often going
beyond what was being asked of him and how these behaviors laid the
foundation for his leadership style.

Dr. Williamson recalled:

If I had to go on a field trip, I paid attention to everything that went on
from who got the bus, who the bus driver was, what the company was,
what route we took, etc. Why? Because all of those things apply now
and have applied in every professional role and responsibility I’ve
had; project management, time management, budgeting, personnel,
and fiscal affairs.

Like Dr. Keith and Dr. Bruce, who Dr. Williamson chose to associate with was
also influenced by how he viewed himself. As previously mentioned, Dr.
Williamson had five close friends that he grew up with in a poor,
predominantly Black, gang infested community in the mid-west during the
1950’s. The fact that all of them avoided the influence of their neighborhood
gang, and that they all graduated from high school and went on to college
speaks volumes. However, the fact that they all also went on to have
successful careers, with one becoming a vice president of a bank and another
becoming executive director of a foundation, also speaks to how association
becomes such an important part of Dr. Williamson’s story.

The normative patterns of behavior developed by the presidents had a
very clear impact on how they interacted with their immediate and extended
environments. Their environments influenced how the men viewed
themselves, who they chose as friends, and, ultimately, established the
foundation for personality traits that would serve as the underpinning for
their academic and professional successes.
Environmental Factors

The effect of the intersection of the president’s extended and immediate environments was clear throughout their stories. Each president understood from an early age, the realities of the political, economic, social, and educational disparities that existed in their larger environment. The impact of growing up in racially segregated, homogeneous, and integrated communities and schools were the clear messages about their differences and the unsaid rules that existed.

Two of the clearest statements about this came from Dr. Ben, who was one of the youngest presidents interviewed and grew up in the South, and Dr. Williamson, who was one of the oldest and grew up in the Mid-West. Dr. Ben stated:

There are race rules, like unwritten and everybody sort of follows them. It was never taught as much as it was lived. We don't teach our children English, they live in an English-speaking environment so that's what children grow up speaking.

Dr. Williamson shared:

I will never ever forget this. I was on one side and my brother was on the other and my father walking up the steps to the church and the priest was standing there and getting ready for mass. My father asked, “Are we welcome here?” As a kid I had no understanding of what that meant until much later in life, and it was, “Yeah. I'm a Catholic convert and I'm raising my children as Roman Catholic, but I still have to ask permission to come into your Christianity.” Now, that says a lot about my evolution and perspectives as a Black male, as a Black boy, as a Black child. It didn't harden my perspective but it influenced my perspective.

The influence of the early environmental messages experienced by all of the men appears to be negligible because of the power and influence of the
counter messaging and opportunities provided by their immediate environment. Each president shared countless stories of how they were empowered by men and women in their homes, churches, schools, and community. The vast majority of the presidents were raised in segregated African American communities that were essentially self-efficient and consistently exposed them to Black professionals of all types. Dr. Christian best articulated the influence of early exposure to counter messaging:

I told this story about how our parents encouraged us to be mischievous, too. You have white and colored water fountains and I remember going into a department store, like a Wal-Mart and we would go to the colored water fountain and drink and then we’d go to the white water fountain and the water tastes the same. No one chastised us or penalized us but our parents allowed us to push boundaries. It was an interesting time to grow up. I think, because of those experiences, you can assume that you should be successful in life and understand how to navigate the challenges that you face in life.

This was also echoed in Dr. Bruce’s previous statement about the affect his mother had on his sense of Blackness when he thought it was “so stupid” for any Black person to feel inferior to Whites. Dr. Christian and Dr. Bruce’s examples resulted in them developing a strong sense of their Blackness, and their sense of who they were and what they could accomplish and achieve.

Similarly, Dr. Lewis shared a very simple method one of his most influential teachers used to empower him and other students to navigate challenges and to push limits:

“Ms. Wallace, can I go to the bathroom?” She’d look at you and say, “I don’t know. Can you?” So it was just like a total reorganization to what the limits were. Then I think I started to be the person who pushes the limits versus the person who just sits and listens, which I am still today.
The nurturing, support, and insights provided by a host of individuals within the presidents’ immediate environments provided an essential buffer to the negative messaging provided by their extended environments.

**Moving Forward - Implications for Future Research**

The purpose of this study was to develop a strength-based approach to understanding African American male achievement. As stated in the beginning of this study, African American males are more likely than any other racial, ethnic or gender group to drop out of school, be suspended or expelled, have low GPAs, have low standardized test scores, and be referred to or placed in special education classes (Irving & Hudley, 2008; Whiting, 2006). While the present-day academic challenges which African American males face is unquestionable, what is most disturbing is that researchers have been studying the school failures of young African American males since the 1930’s (Ogbu & Wilson, 1990) with little change. Throughout this period there have been four predominant theoretical perspectives (genetic based, cultural based, low teacher expectations, and student oppositional identity) to explain the academic challenges of young African American males (Wiggan, 2007), all of which are deficit models. To date, there has been very little strength-based research focused on African American males that have contended with the same ecological barriers and yet have achieved. It is the hope that the model developed through this research will serve as the archetype for what needs to be done in the structuring of young African
American boys lives to provide them the foundation for their optimal success. Ideally, other researchers will replicate this approach with other populations of highly successful African American men and advance it to find solutions to improve the academic and professional success of young African American males.

Going forward there are six clear priorities that emerged from this research, which could have long-term impacts on future research:

• Priority #1: Strength-based research should evolve as the predominant model for research centered around African American men’s academic and professional achievement.

• Priority #2: Further research must be done to understand the necessary supports that help African American men successfully navigate the educational system and their careers, specifically the role of the Central Champion.

• Priority #3: Research should revisit Ogbu’s Cultural Ecology Theory and explore if individual agency played any documentable role.

• Priority #4: Research should continue to focus on successful African American men from varying industries to find similarities and differences in their immediate and extended environments.

• Priority #5: The Central Champion Model should be applied to highly successful African American men in other industries.
• Priority #6: Research should be done to explore the applicability and the usefulness of the Central Champion Model within other cultures nationally and internationally.

**Summary**

“Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed.”  
– Booker T. Washington

African American male college/university presidents were selected for this research because of:

• The uniqueness and exclusivity of their position,

• What the position represents in education and the influence presidents hold,

• The intimate knowledge each president has in the field of education,

• The influence that presidents can have on young people and on the country, and

• The substantial academic, social, and professional barriers, which each president had to overcome to attain their position.

For each president, their path to presidency was beset with numerous challenges starting in their homes and elementary schools, and ranging from divorce, drug addiction, special education referrals and homelessness to name a few. While each president had an individual testimony as to how and who helped him navigate the barriers at each stage of his life, the commonalities were the emergence of five core areas; Home Environment,
Community, Extracurricular Activities, Success, and the Central Champion. These five core themes, derived from the study of these eleven highly efficacious African American men, now serves as new knowledge in a historical landscape dominated by deficit-based research.

This study has taken a step toward creating an effective model of analysis for families, research, and policy makers to examine the support structures in young African American males’ lives necessary to elevate their innate abilities for success. It also provides a starting point in understanding the experiences, relationships, and actions that facilitate the process African American males must go through to be proactive and to appropriately seek, receive and take advantage of opportunities provided by a Central Champion. It is the intent of this study to help generate new discussion and debate on the topic of African American male achievement. More importantly, this study hopes to foster a broader understanding that, if America truly wants to see more young African American boys achieving academically and professionally, there are two essential next steps. One, research and policy must be rooted in a strength-based achievement centered ideology so we can truly begin to understand the elements that lead many young African American men to succeed academically and professionally regardless of their background and profession. Two, because the role of the Central Champion was indispensable to the growth and development of each of the presidents in this study, additional research must be conducted about how this
relationship type can be fostered in the lives of more African American men of all ages.

In conclusion, from the results of this study we now know that the interdependent relationship between the Home Environment, Community, Extracurricular Activities, Success, and the Central Champion set the stage in each of the presidents’ immediate and extended environments allowing for academic and professional success. This is an ideal starting point, using strength-based research, for accessing the interplay of these five core themes in the lives of other highly successful African American men from all industries.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Main Research Questions:
1. Did self-efficacy play a significant role in each African American college president’s life?
2. What is the relationship between each president’s level of self-efficacy and academic achievement?
3. What is the relationship between a president’s level of academic achievement and their professional success?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Extended: • What were the barriers (if any) associated with the political, economic, social &amp; educational structures that you experienced as a child? Immediate • Which domain/s (family, school, church, and community) were the most influential in your life as a child? How would you rank them? • Who outside of your home or school was the most influential in your life? Why? • What activities did you engage in as a youth that were the most influential on</td>
<td>Extended: • Describe the community you primarily grew up in? • How would you describe your elementary, middle and high schools? • Was your community active politically? Immediate: • Can you rank (1-4) the level of influence that your family, school, church and community had on who you are today? • Who were some of the most influential people in your</td>
<td>Extended: • Length of time (number of moves), Rural vs. Urban, economic status, demographics, close-knit vs. distant. Quality, resources, student/teacher relationships, neighborhood vs. beyond, public vs. private, large vs. small, high vs. low expectations. Voting culture, social change culture, enfranchised vs.</td>
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</table>

201
<p>| who you are today? • Describe the relationship that you had with your parents/caretakers in detail. | life growing up? • What activities were you involved in as a youth that were most influential? • What was your relationship like with your parent/s and what messages did your parent/s convey to you about life/education/government/church? | disenfranchised Immediate: • Is there a clear delineation or do they struggle to separate some/all of them. • Parents vs. family members vs. friends vs. friends’ parents vs. teachers vs. community members vs. church members. • How was their time spent outside of school-extracurricular activities? • Close vs. distant, one vs. two parents, were there any extended family members in the home, did they feel loved, cared for, listened to, and supported, influential vs. non-influential, how were their ideas treated, could they ask for help? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral</th>
<th>Personal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What were the expectations that had been set for you by your parents?</td>
<td>• Describe the earliest memories you have about your own education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Who were the significant teachers throughout your life and what are your most significant memories about each of them?</td>
<td>• At what age did you begin to have a sense of what you wanted to accomplish as an adult?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What school-related activities had the greatest effect on you? Why?</td>
<td>• Looking back on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What feedback or advice did you receive as a youth from adults that was the most influential to you?</td>
<td>• Can you describe your earliest memories about your education whether it was at home, school, or in the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What opportunities were you provided as a youth that you were encouraged to seize?</td>
<td>• What are your earliest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Did your parents establish expectations for you in regards to home, school, and the community?</td>
<td>• Were there books &amp; educational magazines in the home, did their parents read to them, encourage them to read, did they go to museums, plays, etc.?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What teachers were most influential in your life? Why?</td>
<td>• How they were held accountable.</td>
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<td>• What were the most important activities you were involved in at school?</td>
<td>• How they were made to feel and what they learned from their teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do you remember ever being impacted by any advice any adult ever gave you?</td>
<td>• What they learned about themselves through their involvement in each activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do you remember ever being encouraged to take advantage of any particular activities as a youth?</td>
<td>• Where advice came from and how they benefited.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• How they were held accountable.</td>
<td>• Want to know if adults urged them to get involved in activities outside of the classroom and how were they influenced by those activities.</td>
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<td>your life, what were the most significant factors that contributed to your academic achievement?</td>
<td>memories about the type of student you wanted to be and what you wanted to accomplish professionally?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What were the barriers you had to overcome as a youth to get to where you are today?</td>
<td>• What were the most significant influences on your academic identity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where did your three to five most influential moments in your early life that have led you to this point now?</td>
<td>• What would you describe as the 3-5 most significant challenges you had to contend with growing up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In your opinion, what were the essential qualities and characteristics that enabled you to take advantage of the career advancement opportunities you sought?</td>
<td>• What educational opportunities did you take advantage of?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where did your sense of self-leadership/self-worth come from, and how was it cultivated?</td>
<td>• Where did your sense of self-leadership/self-worth come from, and how was it cultivated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• At what age do you remember becoming goal-oriented? As memories about the type of student you wanted to be and what you wanted to accomplish professionally?</td>
<td>• How was your sense of right and wrong/moral code developed and cultivated?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What types of goals (large/small), academic vs. athletics vs. social vs. professional, etc.</td>
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<td>• How important has their interpersonal skills been to their academic and professional success?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>examples of what?</td>
<td>At what age did you start setting goals for yourself that you sought to achieve?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How would you describe your ability to build interpersonal relationships? How important to you has this skill been in your academic and professional success?</td>
<td>How would you describe your ability to build interpersonal relationships?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

exampled by what?

- How would you describe your ability to build interpersonal relationships? How important to you has this skill been in your academic and professional success?

- At what age did you start setting goals for yourself that you sought to achieve? How would you describe your ability to build interpersonal relationships?
APPENDIX B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE OF STUDY: Getting It Right: African American Male College/University President and Their Early Cultivation of Self-Efficacy

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Joseph Berger
University of Massachusetts
College of Education
126 Furcolo Hall
Amherst MA, 01003
(413) 545-3610
jbberger@educ.umass.edu

Co-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Tony Randall
University of Massachusetts
College of Education
126 Furcolo Hall,
Amherst MA, 01003
(301) 806-5050
jrandall@educ.umass.edu

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being asked to participate because you are an African American male that has risen through the academy to the rank of college/university president.

WHO IS DOING THIS STUDY?

This study is being conducted by Mr. Tony Randall as part of his dissertation research efforts under the direction of Joseph Berger, Ph.D., University of Massachusetts, College of Education.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to examine how African American male college/university presidents' navigated their collective identity as African American males and how their sense of self-efficacy was cultivated.

Page_______ of_______ Participant Initials___________ Date__________
WHERE IS THIS STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

The study will involve interviewing you in a private location of your choice. The interview will take from 60-90 minutes.

1. Describe the earliest memories that you have about your own education.

2. At what age did you begin to have a sense of what you wanted to accomplish as an adult?

3. Looking back on your life, what were the most significant factors that contributed to your academic achievement?

4. What were the barriers that you had to overcome as a youth to get to where you are today?

5. What were the three to five most influential moments in your early life that led you to this point in time?

Follow-up interview questions are likely to arise from my interactions with you.

Once the interview has been transcribed, another 30-minute phone interview MAY be scheduled to follow up on any missing details or data.

After all of your data has been gathered and the transcribing is complete a copy of your transcript will be sent to you for your review and validation.

The total participation for all interviews and meetings will last up to at least six months.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

The only records linking you and the research would be this consent document, and the taped and transcribed interviews you will be party to. Possible risks would be any potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality.

Page_______ of_______  Participant Initials_______  Date_________
It is not possible to identify all potential risks in the proposed research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in this study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other presidents participating in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you participated in the study and provided information. For example, your consent form will be kept separate from the digital recordings and transcriptions of your interview and these three things will be stored in different places under lock and key. In addition, your transcribed interview will be “scrubbed” of any data that might lead to revealing your identity, geographic location, or college/university affiliation.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in this study please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Joseph Berger, at (413) 545-3610. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Sharon Rallis, Local Review Officer, at (413) 545-1056. We will give you a copy of this consent for your records.
WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?
Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 4 pages.

__________________________________________  ____________
Signature of the person agreeing to participate in the study  Date

__________________________________________  ____________
Printed name of person agreeing to participate in the study  Date

__Tony Randall__________________________
Name of person providing information to participant  Date

__________________________
Signature of Research staff
REFERENCES


