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The Postsecondary Enrollment of Black American Men: The Perceived Influence of Environmental Factors

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The Postsecondary Enrollment of Black American Men: The Perceived Influence of
Environmental Factors

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy

by

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Abstract

In the United States, there has been a consistent under-enrollment of Black American men who have enrolled and graduated from four-year colleges and universities. The result of this lack of educational attainment is problematic, as it can be seen in lower employment rates, higher under-employment rates, higher rates of incarceration, poorer health, and even a lower quality life. Institutional leaders and policymakers have struggled to find solutions for increasing the participation of Black American men with largely mixed results. Most of these programmatic attempts, however, have been limited in their approach and have not taken into account family and informal structures that might impact a Black American man's decision to pursue postsecondary education. Therefore, the purpose for conducting the study was to identify enabling factors that are perceived to encourage Black American men to enroll in postsecondary education.

The study employed a transcendental phenomenological research approach, a qualitative research methodology used to explore phenomena in a systematic manner. There were 8 interview participants who were enrolled in seven institutions in the mid-west/mid-south of the United States. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each individual, and in addition, the Tolerance for Disagreement survey, developed by McCroskey, Richmond, and Stewart, was administered to study participants. The use of the survey was an attempt to explore in-family communication and agreement, and whether those men who decided to attend college were actually in disagreement with their families.

Study findings identified a number of variables that impact an individual's decision to attend college, including personal relationships, interactions with individuals from their social and formal communities, and social organizations that supported them once they were enrolled in

college. Broadly, the study demonstrated support for the emerging field-theory of community expectancy that attempts to explain the formal and informal interactions that an individual has on an outlook or decision, and as was explored in the current study, the decision to attend postsecondary education.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation and research to my mother, Dr. Floyda J. Hicks. I am deeply indebted to you for your love, understanding, patience, and faith in me. You have been the most inspirational, courageous, and supportive person in my life. I appreciate the countless sacrifices that you made to raise me and provide me with the values and expertise that I have needed to succeed to become the man I am today. You played every role that I needed as a single parent and always led me down the right path, walked with me and, many times, carried me when I did not have the strength or capability to persist alone. I would not have persevered and have the chance to complete this dissertation and research without you. I feel fortunate to have a mother as loving, nurturing, and strong as you. I will cherish you and continue to make you proud for as long as I live. I love you!

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Chapter I. Introduction

A. Context of the Problem

There continues to be low and inequitable participation among Black American men in post-secondary education programs when compared to other minority groups. The National Center for Education Statistics (2014) indicated that only 28.5% of Black American men attended college and that only 7.8% of all adult Black American men graduate from college. Current data also show low levels of Black American male enrollment, with under 12% of all college freshmen identifying themselves as such (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2016), a percentage that has risen from 9% in 1976 (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). Eckholm (2006) noted that 72% of Black American men not in college had exited high school early and were unemployed, and that 21% of Black American men not enrolled in college by their 20's were incarcerated.

The low college enrollment and retention of Black American men can be contributed to a number of factors, including the lack of mentorship, student support services, academic preparation, and socialization experiences on college campuses (Browne & Battle, 2018). Cultural misconstructions of Black American men has also led to a misidentification of needs (social and other) by many higher education leaders, scholars, and student affairs professionals (Clopton, 2011). Many students of color, particularly Black American men, have endured a lack of social and emotional support, with one reason being the low numbers of Black American faculty and leaders among non-HBCU campuses. Thus, critical variables, including parent and family influence, can increase Black American men's probability of enrolling in and persisting through college to graduation (Causey, Livingston, & High, 2015).

Parents and family members are influential components in an individual's pursuit of a college education (Causey, Livingston, & High, 2015). Each of these components are, at many

times, within one's most immediate environment, can have a significant impact on a student's decision to attend college, which in turn, can impact their attitudes and behavior about enrolling in and graduating from college. Many higher education institutions have not accounted for the influence that Black American families have on their children, nor have they understood this situation through the lens of the Black American male. The relationships that have existed among family members and Black American men are unique, as with any ethnic or cultural group, however; many colleges have not incorporated this ideal in their institutional structures, cultures, or student support services. Higher education institutions must take proactive steps to understand the social capital development and family expectancy of Black American men, particularly those from single-parent households.

The development and expansion of social capital can be contributed to variables within one's social networks, including an individual's parent(s) and family members. These variables are significant enabling factors that can influence an individual's educational trajectory and path, as well as, their perceptions about the tasks that need to be completed in order to achieve educational goals (Browne & Battle, 2018). The expectations communicated by family members can impact how individuals perceive themselves, their abilities, and others, and thus, can influence an individual's behavior and emotional condition, which ultimately can impact one's decision to enroll in and graduate from college. Therefore, the purpose for conducting the study will be to identify enabling factors that encourage Black American men from single-parent households to enroll in post-secondary education.

B. Statement of the Purpose

The purpose for conducting the study was to identify enabling factors that are perceived to encourage Black American men to enroll in postsecondary education and persist to graduate.

An important element in this research will be the role of the family, specifically single parent households. As the accessibility of this population is limited, the primary focus will be on the role of the family, with special attention given, when possible, to single-parent families. As a member of the family, the Black American male attending college will face some level of understanding or mis-understanding regarding enrolling in college, so the element of disagreement will also be included in the study.

C. Statement of Research Questions

To address the purpose for conducting the study, the following research questions were answered.

1. How did Black American male college students describe their personal experiences that led them to enroll and persist in pursuing a college education?
2. How did Black American men enrolled in college describe the role and perceived power of parental influence in the decision to enroll in higher education?
3. What were the levels of tolerance for disagreement among Black American men enrolled in college?
4. To what extent were the primary elements of community expectancy theory identified as critical by Black American men enrolled in college?
5. What public policies, legislation, and institutional policies were perceived by Black American men to be the most influential in accessing higher education?

D. Definition of Terms

Black American: individuals who identify themselves as being born in America, though their ancestors' origins and heritage come from Africa, Caribbean, or a mixture of heritages from more than one country or continent. Although studies reviewed in the literature may refer to

‘African American,’ the term ‘Black American’ has been used. An important element in this definition is that the term does not directly allude to skin color or pigment, but rather, to an ethnicity constructed of geography, history, and culture (Mereish, N’cho, Green, Jernigan, & Helms, 2016).

College: The terms “college,” “postsecondary education,” and “higher education” are all used interchangeably throughout the study.

Enabling factors: These are the perceived and real elements, tools, experiences, interventions, etc., that are identified through personal perspectives and narratives that are identified by study participants as helping them enroll in college. These ‘factors’ have the power to change behavior to the extent that those interviewed in the study believed that they held this power.

Family: a group of two people or more related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together. The key element being the co-habitation, with, presumably, regular communication regarding things such as expectations of behavior. The family structure might include a biological parent or grandparent, but might also include an aunt or uncle, or even an older sibling raising a younger sibling.

Family household: The physical and implied congregation of individuals residing together or in close proximity that includes someone in an overseeing position, such as a parent or guardian, with subfamily members, typically viewed as children.

Guardian: An authority-based individual who has assumed custody of both the property and the oversight of a person unable to manage personal own affairs, such as a child or similar dependent.

Household: A household consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit. A household includes the related family members and all the unrelated people, if any, such as lodgers, foster children, wards, or employees who share the housing unit.

Post-secondary education: For the purpose of the current study, post-secondary education will be defined as a four-year educational degree granting institution. The study acknowledges the range of educational institutions, such as community colleges and technical institutes, but will limit the current discussion to enrollment in four-year institutions. The names ‘college’ and ‘university,’ will be used interchangeably throughout the study.

Single-parent family: a one-parent household; unmarried, divorced, or separated with at least one child; and a man or woman not or inconsistently present during child’s most. Single-parent families extend to other family members who may be guardians of the child and who also live in single-family households.

E. Assumptions of the Study

1. There are factors or variables in a person’s immediate environment that can influence decisions and behavior, and that these factors can be identified and described in a manner that reflects an individual’s self-knowledge.
2. Different races and ethnicities experience the world and view it differently, resulting in a need to describe these differences from the perspectives in which they are experienced.
3. All individuals have a certain perspective on the world in which they live, and Black American men in particular experience the world and view it in a unique way. This racial identity may be different even from those who are of the same race but in a differently identified gender role.

4. Black American men enrolled in college can critically reflect on what led them to enroll in college and have the psychological ability to reflect on their lives and identify different elements that caused them to behave in a specific way.
5. Post-secondary enrollment is a positive life experience that should be encouraged for many individuals and has the potential to greatly influence a person's life in both financial and personal ways.
6. The use of a personal interviews can be meaningful and accurate in describing life experiences.

F. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study accepted the following limitations and resulting delimitations.

1. The study was descriptive by nature, using qualitative (phenomenological) research techniques. Therefore study findings were not generalizable to the overall population of Black American men and those from single-parent families.
2. As a study using qualitative research methods, data were as trustworthy as the participants choose to disclose. Additionally, data were collected using both in-person and potentially telephone-based interviews. Therefore, study findings must be interpreted with caution.
3. The researcher could have introduced possible biases in the study even when bracketing has been performed.
4. Qualitative (phenomenological) studies explore phenomena, rather than examine the relationships among variables and groups, such as in quantitative research methodology.

G. Importance of the Study

The study offered information to particular individuals, groups, and institutions who focused on increasing participation of Black American men in higher education. Collectively, society will benefit from the increased achievement of Black men in college, both from the perspective of increasing the educational attainment of all citizens, and within the Black American community specifically. Additionally, professionals who work in higher education have a vested interest in responding to the low rate of Black men who attend college and earn a degree. Though the topic of Black American men's persistence in college has previously been included in higher education scholarship and literature, additional studies about Black American male transitions from high school to enrollment, and how those transitions affect retention, are needed to understand how Black American men are influenced by various environmental factors. Finally, this study will be of interest to policymakers who hope to increase enrollment and performance of this population.

The low college enrollment and graduation rates of Black American men not only affects the Black American community, but also society (Browne & Battle, 2018). The unequitable treatment of Black American men in education is an issue that those who value diversity have attempted to reduce and correct in social institutions. Those who advocate for equality will continue to seek strategies that potentially increase participation by Black American men in social settings, such as higher education. Appropriately, college leaders, faculty, and staff hope to address these concerns.

Higher education professionals are in positions to assist Black American men with enrolling in college and earning a degree. A number of college leaders and faculty hope to understand more about the enabling factors that assist these men with their efforts to attain a

post-secondary education, and the barriers that can deter or impede their enrollment and achievement in college. College professionals have interests in increasing the participation levels of Black American men, as does educational scholarship and literature.

The literature in higher education has included several topics concerning the college enrollment and attendance of Black American men, however, additional research studies are needed to explore the factors that encourage a sub-population of these men to pursue higher education, Black American men from single-parent families. Further, understanding the psychosocial aspects and the familial influence of these men's transitions to college can be critical to not only educational professionals, but also policymakers.

Policymakers have an interest to increase economic opportunities for their constituents and locales. Increased participation of Black American men in college can increase opportunities to those who desire upward social mobility. Individuals who graduate from college are able to contribute to the tax base, which can increase financial support of government institutions and projects, such as schools, hospitals, and infrastructure. Additionally, the consequences of not attaining a post-secondary education, including unemployment, narcotics distribution, and incarceration, can decrease as a result of earning a college degree.

H. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The study was grounded in the conceptualization of social, cultural and human capital. Social capital refers to features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Bourdieu (1986) described social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members

with the backing of collectivity-owned capital” (pp. 248-249). Community expectancy, a tenant of social capital, argues that the behavior, beliefs, principles, and actions of community agents, such as family, neighbors, teachers, religious bodies, informal associations, and other elements that students interact with inside of their immediate environments, impacts their identity, values, and behavior, including their decisions (Miller & Deggs, 2012). Social capital enhances the benefits of investment in other capitals, such as cultural and human capital (Putnam, 1993).

Cultural capital exists in three forms (Bourdieu, 1986): in the embodied state, or in the “form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body,” which characterizes an individual’s ‘culture’ (p. 244); in the objectified state, the possession of material goods and objects, such as books and other educational resources, technological products, musical instruments, art and objects; and in the institutionalized state, cultural capital exists in the form of academic qualifications, such as a college degree. The three forms of cultural capital are directly linked to social capital and transmissible to other forms of capital, including human capital.

Human capital refers to the skills, knowledge, and experiences that are invested in individuals. The existence or expansion of a social network can assist individuals, such as Black American men, with increasing their likelihood of connecting with someone about their pursuits, such as attending college or locating employment opportunities. The presence of cultural capital can influence individuals’ cultural identity, knowledge of cultural objects, and dispositions that are needed to succeed in employment positions. The attainment of social and cultural capital, can therefore, be critical, enabling factors as Black American men challenge themselves and ultimately make decisions about who they are and what they will do with their lives. This includes making the often difficult decision about furthering their education in college.

Chapter II. Review of Related Literature

Identifying why some students enroll in college and others do not is a question at the central focus of the current study. The exploration of the cultural and structural variables that enable and deter students from pursuing, or even thinking of pursuing, attending college were explored as literature that could inform the structure and outcome of the study. As a result, the current literature review was divided among the following sections: Black American Men in College, Parental Influence, Tolerance for Disagreement, community expectancy, and Policy Dimensions of Black American Student Attainment. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

The review of literature, including refereed journal articles, were sought from the last 20 years (i.e., 1999-2019) that were relevant to the study. Literature for the current study were collected from a variety of online resources, but was primarily drawn from the University of Arkansas' Mullins Library. Using the subscription services of the UA library, the following terms were used in collecting appropriate scholarly literature: Black American men in college, African American men and college, African American men college enrollment, African American student retention and graduation, parental influence on individual development and college enrollment decisions, African American parents and college and enrollment, parental influence on college going, tolerance of disagreement, tolerance of disagreement and communication, community expectancy, social capital and cultural capital and college decisions, psychosocial development, Black student college attainment policy, and higher education access policy. Literature searches were conducted beginning in 2016 and continued throughout the writing of the research project.

A. Black American Men in College

The literature-based topics about the post-secondary education of Black American men includes trends; enrollment; academic performance; development and identify; social capital variables; and college success. There are many studies that have been reported that have examined the various policy supports that researchers have identified to increase the post-secondary enrollment of Black American men. This national focus has been an issue because the enrollment rate of this underrepresented student population has not significantly changed over time as compared to other student populations, including Black American women (Eckholm, 2006). Scholars and practitioners have attempted to describe the barriers that these men have faced and the outcomes that are associated with not earning a college degree, but also, on how these students persist and graduate from college. More importantly the outcomes of not earning a post-secondary degree may not only present negative consequences for these men, but for their families and communities.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2014) indicated that only 28.5% of Black American men attend college and that only 7.8% of adult Black American men are college graduates. DeBell (2008) noted that 69% of Black students in kindergarten through 12th grade live in fatherless homes. Cook and Córdova (2007) reported that in 2005, 73.5% of Black males between 18-24 years of age graduated from high school, but that only 38% of those who graduated enrolled in some form of a postsecondary program, including community colleges or technical institutes.

Higher education literature has shown how the attainment gap between Black American men and women has increasingly widened, with women comprising the majority of Black American students enrolled and earning degrees (Cohen & Nee, 2000). This degree attainment

also leads to better employment opportunities (McDaniel, DiPrete, Buchmann, & Shwed, 2011). The 13% college completion rate of 28-year-old Black men in 2000 was found to be three times as high as it was for the same group in 1960, which was 4% at that time (McDaniel, DiPrete, Buchmann, & Shwed, 2011). The low completion rate has consequences, including fewer opportunities for social and economic gains, along with quality of life benefits (Elder, 1994; McDaniel, DiPrete, Buchmann, & Shwed, 2011). Therefore, the completion of a college education is critical for the future of Black American men (McDaniel, DiPrete, Buchmann, & Shwed, 2011).

Data reports indicate that 21% of Black American men not enrolled in college by their 20's were incarcerated (Eckholm, 2006). Some researchers have also suggested that the growing concentrations of incarceration among Black American men are those who are or have held low-skilled jobs, and that there is a serious underestimation of Black American men's high school early withdrawal rates by as much as 40% (Ewert, Sykes, & Pettit, 2014). There has been a suggestion by other researchers that the encouragement of parental involvement can raise academic achievement, can reduce juvenile arrest chances, improve student educational attainment, future earnings income, and promote stable employment opportunities (Ou, Mersky, Reynolds, & Kohler, 2007).

Research has also focused on the successes and failures of the postsecondary enrollment of Black American men. Some research has found factors that have contributed to Black American men's choice of college. Means, Clayton, Conzelmann, Baynes, and Umbach's (2016) conducted a case study to identify that rural Black American male students' high school and community context were important in their choice of college. Additionally, though these students had support to attend college from those in their immediate environment, some students

did not have the social capital to provide a “roadmap” (p. 564) to access college. Further, Braddock and Hua (2006) examined the importance of the reputation of schools’ athletic programs when Black American students decide to choose a college. Through older data of 14,915 student responses from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 and the College Choice Inventory (CCI) showed that overall, athletic reputation was not the top factor when deciding which college to attend. However, descriptive, factor, and logistic regression showed that it was considered as an important factor, particularly among male high school seniors, and more so for college-bound male seniors and those who were members of varsity athletic programs (Braddock, & Hua, 2006). Carter’s (1999) study included a sample size of 347 Black American students, a number of who were men, were found to typically not attend their first-choice college.

The literature in higher education that has focused on the college access of Black American men has been a critical topic among scholars in education. These studies have focused on a number of models, including improving financial aid policy (Price & Sheftall, 2015), merit aid (Ness & Tucker, 2008), needs-based aid (Steinberg, Piraino, & Haveman, 2009), early college awareness (Carter, Damico, & Kumasi-Johnson, 2008), academic remediation (Davis & Palmer, 2010), and college preparation and admissions (Bethea, 2016). Astone, Schoen, Ensminger, and Rothert (2000) found that 34% of Black American men reentered school at least once, and that a desire to persist attributed to the decision to re-enroll in college. Factors that explained student persistence were also related to the decision to re-enroll in post-secondary education. A particular disadvantage for these men has been attributed to barriers at the time of transition to post-secondary education (McDaniel, DiPrete, Buchmann, & Shwed, 2011). Lucas

(2018) identified the need for institutions to address the supports that Black American males may need when they arrive at college.

The cost of a college education can be a problem for the initial enrollment as well as continued enrollment, and this is particularly true for many Black American men who are the first in their families to enroll in college (Elliott & Nam, 2012). As a result, many campuses have responded with on-campus financial assistance programs, such as work-study opportunities, and have given students a means of not only gaining professional skills, but to earning money while attending college (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013).

Though financial aid programs offer some financial relief, needs-based grants, such as the federal Pell grant program, cover only one-third of the costs associated with attending a four-year university, and only nearly 60% of attending a community college (Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Baum (2017) argued that public colleges “have a social mission, and excluding qualified students because of their limited ability to pay is not consistent with that mission” (p. 70). Many students, especially those from low-income backgrounds, may not enroll or remain in college because of the lack of financial support, thus not allowing these students an opportunity to progress in their lives. Among students from families with incomes below \$30,000, 62% had their full tuition and fees covered by grants, however, non-tuition costs, such as living expenses could still cause significant financial difficulty for students (Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Because of low income, many parents and students may not be able to provide support for increases in tuition (Price & Sheftall, 2015). Students have also been found to be concerned with academic and financial barriers, such as knowledge about how to obtain financial aid and the consequences of tuition increases (Means, Clayton, Conzelmann, Baynes, & Umbach, 2016).

Historically, there have been a number of college access programs and policies that have been implemented at both the institutional and state levels to assist Black American men in their pursuit of higher education. For instance, some research has focused on the enrollment of Black men in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) to assist in cultural capital development. Tobolowsky, Outcalt, and McDonough (2005) analyzed qualitative data collected from Black American students, parents, and counselors at 20 southern California high schools, and found the importance of access to HBCUs. An analysis of historical data, however, identified that even in the HBCU environment, more women than men are enrolling, and that even in these institutions, Black American men were less likely to graduate and be successful (Lundy-Wagner, & Gasman, 2011).

Additionally, research has investigated the influence of pre-enrollment variables, including the academic preparation to succeed in college that usually begins with the successful attainment and application of academic skills in the secondary school. Pre-enrollment variables are those factors that influence Black American men to enroll, and enable them to enroll, in college. These include variables that transcend all college students, such as the quality of the secondary school curriculum and faculty, financial planning for college (Kim, Chatterjee, Young, & Moon (2017), and expectations for enrollment that come from family backgrounds as well as peer groups.

The ability of different subpopulations with the Black American male population have also been studied, including the use and reliance on developmental education programs. Bailey, Jeong, and Cho (2010) focused on students' progression through a sequence of developmental education courses using data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The study compared Achieving the Dream colleges with national and state public two-

year institutions and found that more students withdrew from their developmental sequences because they did not enroll in the first or a subsequent course, rather than because they failed or withdrew from a course that they were enrolled in. Further, men and Black American students were found to be less likely to progress through, and complete, their remedial program course sequences. Similarly, Ewert (2010) found that Black American men were more likely than Black American women to progress through college discontinuously and as a part-time student. She also found that high school academic performance accounted for the male-female gap in college-going pathways.

Additional research on the Black American male has shown how the educational expectations of Black American adolescents from low to moderate income families and who lived in a suburban neighborhood were significantly correlated with their perceptions of their parents' educational expectations (Newton & Onésimo Sandoval, 2015). Other studies reported that there has been a significant relationship between students' educational expectations and parent's level of education (Newton & Onésimo Sandoval, 2015) which may also influence students' academic outcomes. Teklesassie, Mallery, and Choi (2013) studied home background factors and found Black American men's home process characteristics, including parental involvement and consistency of educational expectations, as well as academic performance were critical predictors of college enrollment.

Alexander, Bozick, and Entwisle's (2008) qualitative study described that a students' educational expectations can and do change over time in high school. Further, perception of parents' beliefs was negatively correlated with students' value of education (Newton & Onésimo Sandoval, 2015), suggesting that students at times rebel against their parents and do not want to do what the parental figures want them to do. Yet, educational expectations and value of

education were found to be positively correlated, as was parental education level and value of education.

Several studies have focused on the persistence, resilience, and college attainment of Black American men in college. Green, Brand, and Glasson (2019), who employed Actor-Network Theory (ANT), examined Black American students' college experiences who attended predominately white institutions (PWI). They found that ANT can be used to identify individuals' potential for achievement as it directly relates to the ability to successfully engage key actors, including faculty and peers, as well as to successfully navigate the codes, symbols, and institutionalized racial and power structures on campus. Lucas (2018) investigated literature that was found to impact the current levels of support for Black American men who attend PWIs, and identified that much of the research has not focused on pre-enrollment conditions. Lucas noted that many of these men from this population who have been raised in single-parent families, and who have persisted in college, have particular support that have assisted them in persevering, including a male role model/mentor; a supporting mother; the desire to achieve an education; resilience; and having continued respect for their fathers (Cartwright & Henriksen, 2012).

Strayhorn (2015) studied factors that influence Black American men's preparation for STEM fields and identified the importance of pre-college self-efficacy, meaning that those students who feel confident in their academic abilities and believe in themselves as academically sufficient enroll in and persist in STEM majors. Scherer, Talley, and Fife (2017) employed hierarchical linear regression and correlational analysis to explore Black American students' personal factors that influenced academic behavior (PIAB) as well as achievement, and found that students' benefited from stress reduction techniques, development of academic habits, time

management practices, behavioral self-regulation, and emotion regulation (ER) skills. The resilience level of students has also shown to contribute to Black American male students' success in college (Debb, Colson, Hacker, & Park, 2018).

Several factors have been identified as assisting Black American men to have resilience in college and complete their baccalaureate degrees, including having an understanding of the importance of post-secondary education, having access to critical resources needed to persist, having a mentor, and having resilience when challenged with barriers that could otherwise impede their progress in college (Warde, 2008).

Literature has also suggested that college students persist through post-secondary education by recognizing the value of support offered by family and community members (Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013). Green and Martin's (2018) research described the barriers that could prevent Black American males from progressing through college in a teacher education program. They found that students felt isolated, felt teacher bias against them, and their perceptions of non-culturally responsive instructional practices in the classroom. Palmer (2015) discussed how help-seeking behaviors and masculine identity could be a critical issue for some Black American men in college. Johnson (2013) identified that various psychosocial factors have been found to be linked to academic achievement, but in contrast, Dixson, Roberson, and Worrell (2017) found different results, including that psychosocial factors, including grit, growth mindset, ethnic identity, and other group orientation were not related to the achievement of students who were considered high achieving Black American students. Though academic support has been identified critical to the development of Black American male resiliency (Kim & Hargrove, 2013), research has shown that academic support is not the sole component that promises success on college campuses. High achieving Black American men who attend college have been more

likely to have higher levels of self-efficacy and much stronger levels of social integration than those men who were not high achieving (Reid, 2013).

There are several studies that have also identified the influence of social and cultural capital on Black American men's success in college. Social and cultural capital have been included in multiple studies on Black American men, including research by Brooms (2018) who studied sense of belonging and Yosso (2005) who studied community cultural wealth. Persistence for most students was defined as their involvement on campus; developing community with and among Black American males; and remaining focused on their educational goals. Additionally, community cultural wealth was found useful for Black American men in Engineering, and students reported that multiple forms of navigational, aspirational, familial, and resistance capital contributed to students' persistence in their academic programs (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016).

An example of programming using social and cultural capital includes the Male Initiative on Leadership and Excellence (MILE), which included 53 undergraduate participants at an HBCU. The program found that the enhancing of social capital, including bonding, mentoring, and social support network all combined to produce higher completion rates (Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy, 2013). There are also variables unique to Black American men that can impact their decision to pursue higher education and ultimately enroll in college. These can include variables such as mentoring (Ransaw, 2014) and students feeling comfortable with other students of similar racial identity (Harper, 2013). According to Strayhorn (2012), sense of belonging referred to students' feelings that members of a group matter to one another and the group itself, perceived "indispensability within a system," and students' "sense of being accepted, valued, and cared about in academic settings" (p. 49).

In Jayakumar, Vue, and Allen's (2013) research, which also employed community cultural wealth, examined a community-initiated college preparation program and found that the critical cultural elements that provided students with a college-going culture were resources and support structures; motivational support and expectations; peer environments; and the cultural relevance of the curriculum and content of the program. Additional literature has also found how the influence of social supports from ecological factors including parents, peers, and teachers, influence the academic achievement of Black American male ninth grade high school students, as support from peers was related to GPA (Somers, Owens, & Piliawsky, 2008). Equally important is the concept of community expectancy, which argues that the behavior, beliefs, principles, and actions of community agents, such as family, neighbors, teachers, religious bodies, informal associations, and other elements that students interact with inside of their immediate environment, impacts an individual's values and behaviors, including those directed at participation in postsecondary education (Miller & Deggs, 2012).

Research has also found that peer influences were more prevalent in a students' early adolescence stages in contrast with late adolescence (Berndt, 1979; Collins & Thomas, 1972), and peer perceptions can have a compounding influence on what a student chooses to engage in, including clubs, organizations, and sports. Extra-curricular activities have been, in turn, significantly correlated with students' value of education (Newton & Onésimo Sandoval, 2015). Shifrer, Pearson, Muller, and Wilkinson (2015) found the college-going benefits for Black American male students who participated in high school sports teams, and found to have been relatively constant for 4-year college enrollment in the past three decades.

Research has focused on Black American siblings influence on higher education attendance decisions, notably focusing on the influence of older siblings. Loury (2004)

specifically found that older sibling activities' such as attending college had a significant positive influence on Black American women attending college, but that this did not hold true for men with older siblings. Loury concluded that older sisters influenced their little sisters' decision to attend college, but that having older brothers who attended college did not influence the decisions of younger brothers.

This literature on Black American men in college portrays an area that has a significant amount of research and writing, but that many of these studies are isolated to single institutions or groups (such as STEM students). Further, these studies often document areas of problem or potential growth, but rarely identify large scale solutions to helping to increase the enrollment of Black American men in higher education. Further research that looks at the roots of the causes of non-enrollment is needed, and this must include how these men interact with their environment and what might be happening at younger age levels that could possibly influence their developmental outlook on life, including their outlook and expectations for what life looks like and how formal school is a part of that. Authors such as Bronfenbrenner (1977) have stressed the need to look at the environment that raises Black American men, and this includes relationships with family members, particularly how parents influence their development. The role of family is not isolated, however, and includes extended family, family interactions, community relationships that the family holds, and ultimately, it is this collection of familial activities from a very young age that have the potential to influence the Black American man's identity formation (Miller & Deggs, 2012). The ability of this man to succumb to a family's expectation, or to challenge it, requires a certain level of tolerance for disagreement (Teven, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1998) that would allow the individual to challenge expectations to break away from family traditions to do something different, such as attend college far from home. These topics of

family expectations, community expectations, and tolerance for disagreement are covered in additional sections of this literature review, in particular how they related to college-going behaviors, with special attention to personal development during their early life-stages (Elder, 1994).

B. Parental Influence

A great deal of research has examined the significance of parental characteristics on children, particularly those that have influenced Black American males to attend and graduate from post-secondary education. Studies have found that some characteristics from parents can encourage college enrollment, while other characteristics have been found to hinder or obstruct children's paths towards college enrollment, and therefore, create non-opportunities for their children to earn a Bachelor's degree from a four-year higher education institution. In addition, many studies have focused on the characteristics that parents have exhibited during the adolescence stage of their children's development, which studies have described as critical to males' educational achievement during their middle- and high-school years, and trajectories towards their enrollment in post-secondary education. A search of past refereed literature from the University of Arkansas' Library database was used to secure past peer-reviewed research articles from the past 20 years.

Several studies have examined the influence of various structures in Black American families on children's development and educational outcomes. For instance, research has shown that children who have been raised in nuclear families, as compared to those who were raised in non-traditional family structures, had significantly better educational outcomes (Ginther & Pollak, 2004), including that of boys' GPA (Madyun & Lee, 2010). Similarly, parents in Black American nuclear families were found to have more communication about school with their

children (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013) than single-parent households, which has been associated with the less time that many single-parents have due to their jobs and schooling. Additionally, some children have been raised by caregivers in unique family structures, including those led by grandparents, stepparents, and foster care facilities or homes.

Song (2016), who employed a regression research approach, showed the importance of grandparents' effect on that of Black American grandchildren's education, which was positively related to the education of their grandparents, and was much stronger for grandchildren who had been raised in two-parent families, as compared to single-parent families. Additionally, students who had lived in homes with stepparents were less likely than those from two-parent families to attend and graduate from four-year colleges (Wojtkiewicz & Holtzman, 2011). Children who had been raised in non-traditional households, including those who were young adults by the time that they aged and transitioned out of foster care, reported that because they did not have their family of origin or their foster care families as consistent supports to assist them with enrolling in college, their major influences to enroll in college, instead became supports they found in their communities and social networks (Lane, 2016). The educational success of many children who have been raised in single-parent households, and those who have transitioned to or from other family structures, has been a critical topic in past education literature.

Fomby's (2013) logistic regression analysis, found that a change in the structure of families, such as those that transition from a nuclear to a single-parent household, particularly when children are 14 years of age or younger, was negatively associated with the likelihood that their children would enroll in four-year colleges and complete a Bachelor's degree by the age of 24 years old. In contrast, Wojtkiewicz and Holtzman's (2011) regression analysis, after family income and parental education were controlled, found that students who had lived in mother-only

households, as compared to those who lived with two biological parents, were as likely to attend and graduate with a four-year college degree given that they graduated from high school.

Particularly for males from single-parent homes, research has shown that positive outcomes were lower than that of females (Browne & Battle, 2018), but parental strategies that Black American single mothers have used to influence their sons' educational success, including their roles to nurture, motivate, and provide resources to support their sons' education (Robinson & Werblow, 2012), rather than attempts to exert high levels of parental control over their sons, which has been shown to negatively influence their education (Browne & Battle, 2018).

Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2013), could not find a significant relationship between parenting style among Black American parents and their children's enrollment in honors or advanced placement (AP) courses, however; some past studies have shown how parenting styles and beliefs have influenced their children's achievement in school and enrollment in college. Parenting philosophies used by Black American parents, including those who have used punishments systems, rather than non-punitive techniques including the use of reward systems, to address their sons inadequate performance in high school, including their grades in core subjects in high school, were found to have been an ineffective method to improve their sons' achievement in school and while persistence to graduating with a college degree (Robinson & Harris, 2013; Spruill, Hirt, & Mo, 2014). Therefore, the role of authoritative parenting characteristics rather than permissive parenting characteristics, including warmth and supportiveness, such as motivation, can significantly predict students' academic performance in school (Turner, Chandler, & Heffer, 2009).

Many past research studies have also focused on factors, such as parents' involvement in their children's educational experiences, and how their involvement, such as advice (Madyun

& Lee, 2010) influences educational performance and attainment, particularly in earlier grades (Joe & Davis, 2009). The activities that Black American parents who participated with their sons during their attendance in high school, including traveling on domestic and international trips, visiting fine arts venues, and attending sporting events with their sons during their attendance in high school, were positively influenced their sons persistence toward their college degree (Spruill, Hirt & Mo, 2014). Primary caregivers of rural Black American adolescents who were 16 years old reported that providing their children with family routines, such as eating regularly with their family and consistent bedtimes, reported higher rates of their children's college enrollment by their young adulthood (Barton, Brody, Kogan, Chen, & Ehrlich, 2019). Studies have identified how parents have influenced students' college planning (Hines, Borders, Gonzalez, Villalba, & Henderson, 2014), such as their choice of major (Ma, 2009) and choice of college (Harrison & Wood, 2014), including the values that Black American parents have placed on institutions (Chapman, Contreras, & Martinez, 2018). Parents' education level, has been associated on children's higher academic achievement. However, Chi-square and t-tests have shown that the strongest associations to mediate for parents' educational backgrounds, was their involvement in their children's schools - mainly during the early years of their children's educational experiences, including elementary grade-levels (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Black American father's educational level has been found to significantly influence the academic achievement of Black American high school students in upper grade-levels (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013).

Parents who have provided a home environment that has been structured to support academic involvement, as well as, communicated and conveyed values about the importance of education and future plans with their children, motivated their children to behaviorally and

emotionally engage in their academic experiences, which in turn led to higher academic achievement (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). A study that employed regression analysis and used a sample that included 30% of Black American students, sought associations between parental involvement and college enrollment, and found that parents' involvement in the home and school setting was analyzed as a static and uniform construct, and showed that levels of parental involvement did not change over the course of their children's grades-levels, specifically from 7th – 12th grades, but when analyzed as multidimensional construct: academic values, behaviors promoting future academic success, home structure, and school involvement, (Degol, Wang, Ye, & Zhang, 2017).

A study that employed Hierarchical Generalized Linear Modeling (HGLM) found that Black American students' consistency of expectations was a predictor of college enrollment (Tekleselassie, Mallery, & Choi, 2013). Zhang, Haddad, Torres, and Chen (2011), employed cross-lagged path models and multiple-group analysis in their research study and found that the effects of parents' expectations on students' expectations were stronger among males than females, however, the effects of adolescents' expectations on parents' expectations were the weakest among Black American adolescents. Wood, Kurtz-Costes, and Copping's (2011) research study also found that males' expectations of their educational attainment and educational utility values contributed to their on-time post-secondary progress, however, their educational aspirations did not impact their outcomes during college. Additionally, Purtell and McLoyd's (2013) evaluation of a program, which included a sample of 1,105 youth (56% Black American) from 745 families that participated in a work-based program for lower-income adults, found that the adolescents' educational expectations was a more significant factor than their parents' expectations, which influenced their high expectations about their opportunities to

secure employment in the future. Family-related process components, such as nonverbal communication, including unspoken expectations among family members, were critical to rural adolescents' aspirations to attend college, and were directly and indirectly related to increases in post-secondary enrollment (Agger, Meece, & Byun, 2018).

Jung, Hwang, Zhang, and Zhang's (2018) research study employed a descriptive analysis and bivariate correlation analysis that showed parents' expectations during their children's adolescence stage directly predicted their children's expectations, self-esteem and educational attainment, which was related to the children's life satisfaction in adulthood. An evaluation of a program for parents of Black American males showed the boys' self-efficacy and ethnic identity influenced their Future Educational Orientation (FEO), such as the value they place on their academic effort, achievement, and future educational goals (Kerpelman, Eryigit, & Stephens, 2008). Additionally, researchers' findings showed that parents' expectations during their children's adolescence years of development were also indirectly associated with their children's increased self-esteem during their adolescence stage to adulthood (Jung, Hwang, Zhang, & Zhang, 2018). Wood, Kurtz-Costes and Copping (2011), employed regression analysis, and found that parents' expectations were positively related to 11th grade males' educational attainment aspirations, attainment expectations, and utility values (i.e., beliefs about the usefulness of education). Parents' expectations were also positively related to their boys' motivation, and both were directly and indirectly influenced by the boys' perceptions of their parents' expectations (Wood, Kurtz-Costes, & Copping, 2011). Interestingly, Black American father's expectations has been found as a negative predictor of GPA for Black American males, which Hines and Holcomb-McCoy's (2013) study that employed a hierarchal regression analysis and a sample of 11th and 12th grade Black American males.

Black American parents advocated for their children's educational goals - despite adverse life circumstances, instilled self-efficacy in their children, motivators, and co-educated their at home and were role models in their children's lives (McGee & Spencer, 2015). Furthermore, past research studies have found that adolescents' aspirations can be influenced by their family members, particularly their parents. Nichols, Kotchick, Barry-McNamara, and Haskins (2010), employed a hierarchical multiple regression analysis to examine several predictors from Black American adolescents' ecological factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), and found that adolescents' attitudes toward school and their education; their perception of their parents' high expectations in regards to their education was a significant predictor of their educational aspirations, in contrast; the adolescents' self-esteem towards school and their education had not been found to be a predictor of their educational aspirations. Black American students who had negative perceptions of how well their high school prepared them, were less likely to aspire to attending college (Pitre, 2006). Black American parents' academic involvement has been related to their children's achievement in school and educational aspirations (Hill, Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 2004).

Crosnoe's (2004) multilevel modeling on nationally representative data (n = 11,927) revealed that emotionally distant relationships with parents were associated with declining academic achievement over 2 years of secondary schooling and that various aspects of the social environments of schools were associated with increasing academic achievement during this same period. Kerpelman, Eryigit, and Stephens's (2008), evaluation found only modest support that Black American students' perceived parental support of their educational achievement, influenced the students' Future Educational Orientation (FEO). Gebre and Taylor (2017), found that poor relationships between Black American undergraduates and kin were negatively

correlated with students' self-esteem, which was related with their psychological distress, and additionally, poor relationships had a negative effect on students' adaption to college, which decreased their self-esteem and increased their perceptions of stress. A case study also revealed that the definition of family for some college students who had been raised in foster care households, mostly included their perceptions of support from relationships with fictive kin (Tierney & Venegas, 2006), rather than their biological family members, who they had few interactions with and little influences from (Kearney, Naifeh, Hammer, & Cain, 2019).

Past studies have shown the importance of the relationships that students have with their family members at various stages of their life-course, most notably, their parents or caregivers, who for many students, are critical social networks that have influenced their individual development and decisions to attend college (Israel, Beaulieu, & Hartless, 2001; Crosnoe, 2004; Perna, & Titus, 2005; Parcel & Bixby, 2016). Cohesion in families has been significantly correlated to positive developmental outcomes, including children's higher levels of sociopolitical control (i.e., their competence in leadership skills and perceptions of their ability to participate in school activities and make decisions), which in turn was linked to higher levels of self-esteem, instead of psychological symptoms, including depression, anxious perceptions of self, and perceptions of the importance of school and education (Christens & Peterson, 2012). Lamborn and Nguyen (2004) found positive associations with adolescents who perceived stronger support with their extended kin, reported higher psychosocial development and stronger attitudes about school, which were partially linked to their parenting practices, including students' perceptions of maternal warmth and paternal self-reliance. Lee, Padilla, and McHale (2016), found that the work ethic of fathers in Black American nuclear families was associated with their oldest child's

work ethic, which was linked to their positive emotional development and their adjustment in educational activities in school.

The significance of Black American fathers on their children, particularly on boys, has extended to other families members, including the parental roles fulfilled by their uncles (Richardson, 2009). The use of regression analysis, DeBell's (2008) bivariate comparisons showed that the absence of fathers was associated with children's reduced well-being, including their health, lower academic achievement, worse educational experiences, and less parental involvement in their school activities, to the contrary, when income, education, and other factors were controlled using multivariate analysis, fathers' resident status was not associated with children's well-being. A phenomenological study that explored the success of Black American men who were raised in homes without their fathers, revealed that a strong relationship with their mother, interactions with role models and mentors, and the support of extended families members attributed to their success (Wilson, Henriksen, Bustamante, & Irby, 2016).

Dissonance between Black American males' cultural beliefs, values, and the norms that were developed in their homes and families, and their school contexts, were associated with lower adaptive psychological and academic functioning, including lower academic efficacy, motivation, and goal orientation, as well as decisions that led to harmful consequences (Brown-Wright & Tyler, 2010). Parents who were involved in religious activities with their children, were more likely to provide more school-related advice to their children, as compared to parents who were not (Madyun & Lee, 2010). Additionally, Gooden and McMahon's (2016) research study used a structural regression model found that religiosity, religious support, and communalism were associated with Black American students indicator of positive adolescent development and well-being. For some students, church involvement, religious practice, and

spirituality attributed to their successful transitions to college, academic performance, career selection, and ability to cope with stress (Donahoo & Caffey, 2010). Religious involvement was associated with higher school bonding and student-teacher connectedness for Black American adolescents (Kim, Harty, Takahashi, & Voisin, 2018). In contrast to other studies, church attendance, religious importance, and racial pride failed to predict grade performance, however, Black American boys with high racial pride were strongly related to their beliefs about the utility, or benefits, of school for their future achievement and success (Butler-Barnes, Williams, & Chavous, 2012). Further, the males' perception of barriers to their upward mobility, including those that were perceived as racial, were associated with their lower utility values and a lower probability to enroll in college one year after their high school graduations (Wood, Kurtz-Costes, & Copping, 2011).

Studies have shown that students' success in school has been linked to their perceived attachment to their parents and family members, which has been found to influence their racial identity development (DeCuir-Gunby, Martin, & Cooper, 2012; Thomas, Love, Roan-Belle, Tyler, Brown, & Garriot, 2013), as well as their racial socialization and self-pride (Berkel, Murry, Hurt, Chen, Brody, Simons, Cutrona, & Gibbons, 2009), and self-esteem (Causey, Livingston, & High, 2015) in secondary and higher education contexts. Extended family members, or kin, have also been shown to influence Black American sixth graders' future orientation (McCabe & Barnett, 2000) and the ethnic identity of Black American teenagers (Lamborn & Nguyen, 2004). Additionally, Love (2008), who employed attachment theory to examine the influence of maternal and paternal attachments with their children, revealed that parents who exhibited overprotectiveness and invasiveness were associated with Black American college students' psychological distress, but the parents who exhibited warmth and care toward

their children, decreased their levels of stress and anxiety (Gebre & Taylor, 2017). Negative interactions that children have with their parents, including emotional abuse and neglect, have been shown to contribute to their development and dissociation of attachments (Wright, Crawford, & Castillo, 2009).

C. Tolerance for Disagreement

The postsecondary enrollment of Black American men has not changed dramatically over the past several decades, even though there have been a number of policy initiatives and practical programs to increase this population's enrollment. The continued low college enrollment of these men (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014) may be attributed to a number of factors, including the perceived influence of environmental factors, such as an individual's family. As described earlier, literature has supported the important role of family in an individual's decision to pursue postsecondary enrollment. Additionally, the family coupled with other environmental factors can greatly impact an individual's world view (Derden, & Miller, 2014), and coupled with immediate influencers such as family members, can help predict enrollment decisions.

The challenge for first-generation college students is that they do something that others in their families have not done. By making the decision to pursue college, the individual is faced with potentially challenging the family's view or perspective on what is appropriate and what has been done in the past. The individual breaks a mold of compliance, and in some instances, must be willing to disagree with those who are lived with, loved, respected, etc. To attend college, the individual must be potentially willing to live with disagreement. The Tolerance for Disagreement (TFD) construct and measurement scale, therefore, informs the study by identifying an individual's high or low TFD, based on the expectations and interactions they

have with their families, which can determine their desire and persistence to enroll in postsecondary education.

The TFD was conceptualized from organizational, group, and interpersonal communication research studies, and has been defined as “the amount of disagreement an individual can tolerate before he or she perceives the existence of conflict in a relationship” (McCroskey, Richmond, & Stewart, 1992, p. 125). The evolution of the concept began when Richmond and McCroskey (1979) investigated employee satisfaction relative to their tolerance for disagreement. They found that employee satisfaction was impacted more by their supervisors’ TFD than employees’ TFD, except when considering promotions. However, McCroskey, Knuston, and Hurt (1975) challenged the use of good and bad conflict in their approach, which they employed by the distinctions made about each term (Burgoon, Burgoon, & McCroskey, 1974). Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond (1998) argued that several studies explained the nature of conflict (Coser, 1956; Fisher, 1970; Horney, 1937; Kilmann, & Thomas, 1977; Mack, 1965; Watkins, 1974), and unsuccessfully differentiated between conflict that led to ‘negative interpersonal outcomes’ and conflict that led to ‘purposeful disagreement,’ which they believed to be ‘constructive’ (Coser, 1956; Deutsch, 1973), rather than ‘destructive’ among individuals in an organizational, group, or interpersonal context. These early studies suggested that disagreement can be either good or bad, and that the context of the communication is critical to understanding how disagreement is or can be used.

Burgoon, Burgoon, and McCroskey (1974) attempted to distinguish between good and bad conflict, further studied by McCroskey, Knutson, and Hurt’s (1975) exploration of the “usefulness” (p. 210) of empirical terms in describing disagreement. Both sets of studies suggested that that it was difficult for individuals to associate positive or constructive outcomes

with the term, “good conflict” (McCroskey, Knutson, & Hurt, 1975, p. 210), which could present challenges to their study participants’ interpretation of the distinct meanings they placed on each term. Ultimately, McCroskey, Knutson, and Hurt identified that many individuals associated the term ‘conflict’ with exclusively negative connotations. Additionally, Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond (1998) explained that Ellis and Fisher (1975) likewise distinguished between the constructs, conflict and disagreement, and suggested a linear three-phase developmental approach to conflict that was characterized as: 1) interpersonal conflict; 2) confrontation; and 3) substantive conflict.

McCroskey and Wheelless (1976) subsequently attempted to differentiate between the meanings of conflict and disagreement in their instrument in order to provide their study’s participants a more clear understanding of each term. Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond (1998) reported that McCroskey and Wheelless used multiple characterizations of disagreement as “differences of opinion on issues” and conflict as “competition, hostility, suspicion, distrust, and self-perpetuation” (p. 210). McCroskey, Richmond, and Stewart (1986) referred to conflict as “hostility, distrust, suspicion, and antagonism” (p. 202), and Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond viewed conflict as the “opposite or antithesis of affinity” and provided similar views of interpersonal conflict (p. 211). McCroskey and Wheelless proposed that the nature of the relationships among individuals is critical, particularly to understand if the interactions among them included disagreements, would intensify to conflict. Hence, they employed “balance theory” and contended that individuals who have a positive affection for one another would be “slower to move” in conflictual communication and behavior with other people than those that have less affection for another person (p. 210). They contended that disagreement did not ultimately lead to conflict, and that even though people may disagree with one another about an

issue, the disagreement did not necessarily enter into conflict. They explained that the degree of affinity between people can determine the movement from disagreement to conflict. They further explained that if a person has a low degree of affinity with another person, and they disagree on some issue, a “trigger” may activate and move the disagreement into conflict (p. 211). In contrast, if a person has a high degree of affinity with another person, and an issue between them exists, the trigger may not activate, therefore keeping the disagreement from entering into conflict.

Additional research (Hurt & Teigen, 1977) that employed the TFD measurement instrument found it to have .90 reliability and predictive validity, however, its face validity was questionable because of the inclusion of the term, conflict. As previously noted, the use of conflict in earlier studies presented challenges for participants’ interpretation of its meaning which caused issues with the face validity of each study. Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond reported that although, some research studies (Martin, Anderson, & Thweatt, 1998; Richmond, & McCroskey, 1979; Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis, 1981) reported that the TFD measurement instrument was useful, its revision was warranted to improve its face validity. Because of the instrument’s face validity issues, Knutson, McCroskey, Knutson, and Hurt (1979) expanded their views about the distinctions between disagreement and conflict.

Knutson, McCroskey, Knutson, and Hurt modified the language they used for the study of disagreement and suggested that suggested that disagreements included interactions about “substantive and procedural matters,” while conflict involved “personal issues” (p. 210) and as “disagreement plus negative interpersonal affect” (p. 211). Additionally, they perceived that research participants would have different views about when interactions changed from disagreements to conflict, and thus, they developed a measure to differentiate between

disagreement and conflict. This included the ability to predict the positive and negative interactions between individuals in organizational, small group, and interpersonal contexts. They reported this measure as an “individual difference variable” that they named the “tolerance for disagreement (TFD),” which was also developed to explain why some individuals perceived the presence of conflict earlier than other individuals during their interactions with others (p. 210).

Additionally, these interactions can include nonverbal communication and messages among individuals (Richmond, McCroskey, & Hickson, 2007). Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond reported that since Knutson’s et al. study, other research studies that employed the TFD (McCroskey, Richmond, & Stewart, 1992; McCroskey, Richmond, & Stewart, 1986; Richmond, & McCroskey, 1992) found similar results as the 1979 study. Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond revised the TFD scale in order to overcome the face validity issues that could have been caused by the original TFD scale’s use of the term “conflict,” which was changed to include the term, “disagreement” (p. 212).

Martin, Anderson, and Thweatt (1998) sought to the study aggressive communication traits and their relationships with the Cognitive Flexibility Scale (Martin, & Rubin, 1995) and the Communication Flexibility Scale (Martin, & Rubin, 1994). They considered each scale’s relationships with argumentativeness, verbal aggressiveness, Machiavellianism, and tolerance for disagreement. According to Martin, Anderson, and Thweatt, cognitive flexibility was defined as a person’s: 1) awareness that in any given situation there are options and alternatives are available; 2) willingness to be flexible and adapt to the situation; and 3) self-efficacy in being flexible. Further, cognitive flexibility consisted of individual’s willingness to be flexible and their confidence in their abilities to behave effectively. Communication flexibility involved the adaption of a person’s behavior among various situations and in situations in order to

communicate “effectively and appropriately” (p. 532). They hypothesized that each scale would be positively related to TFD, and with study participants totaling 276 college students with a mean age of 21.85, they found that both flexibility scales shared relationships with TFD. Further, Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond explained that people will differ in how they tolerate disagreement with others, and that McCroskey (1992), explained differences in individual’s low and high tolerance for disagreement. He argued that those with a low tolerance for disagreement are “highly conflict prone” and those with a high tolerance for disagreement are “relatively conflict resistant” (p. 211). Teven, McCroskey, and Richmond’s study sought to further establish higher reliability, face validity, and divergent validity to the TFD scale. Their revision of the TFD scale provided a replicable measurement that can investigate and test theories related to disagreement, conflict, and affect.

Further studies have utilized the TFD measurement scale, such as Lamude and Torres (2000) who with a sample of 156, reported that TFD was associated with the perceptions of supervisors’ use of referent, expertise, and reward-based tactics and less use of legitimate and punishment-based tactics of influence. Miloloa, Šimović, Milkovic, Bezić, Bakic-Tomic, and Vlashaj (2014) found that gender and age did not affect TFD for college students in Croatia. Linvill, Mazer, and Boatwright (2016) examined the need for cognition (NFC) as a mediating variable between verbal aggressiveness (VA) and argumentativeness and an individual’s TFD. They found each of these communication traits do not exist in isolation, but rather, they suggested that if underdeveloped skills exist in one trait, may impede the development of skills in another communication area.

The TFD construct and measurement scale informs the current study in that if an individual is to do something with a life-plan that is different than a parents or caregivers, then

there will be disagreement. There are various social capital variables in people's immediate environment (i.e., environmental factors) that may encourage, hinder, or obstruct pathways to enroll in college. However, the presence of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995; 2000; 2001; Flora, Flora, & Gasteyer, 2016) itself, may not be entirely sufficient to explore how Black American men succeed in navigating environmental factors that enable them to enroll in college.

Additionally, ecological development theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) has been useful in understanding the processes, but not the outcomes from the presence of environmental factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Therefore, this study employs the Model of Community or Family Expectancy (Derden, & Miller, 2014), a tenant of social capital and incorporates the stages of psychosocial development, in order to explore the influence of individuals' interactions with their environmental factors. Thus, the TFD scale can inform the study and provide a tool to use to measure participants' TFD with their family members, particularly their parent(s) or caregiver(s). A person's family are usually the most immediate environmental factors that in a person's life that can influence their development and the decisions they make, based on the choices that they perceive they may have to make those decisions from. Therefore, a TFD measurement can assist with exploring how Black American men's development was influenced by their family's expectations, the reciprocated interactions that occur between them, and the level of TFD that a person may have when verbally or nonverbally interacting with their family members about their plans to enroll in college, which can ultimately encourage, enable, or inhibit their decision to enroll.

D. Community Expectancy

Flora, Flora, and Gasteyer (2016) discussed three elements of community: location; social system, and common identity, each as separate elements. Deggs and Miller's (2011A) study included definitions by Cohen (1985) that described communities as collections of people who have commonalities with one another, but who also may differentiate themselves from other groups of people. They also referenced Levy's (1966) work that indicated that the identification of communities include "role differentiation, common organizations, common relationship aspects, and common problems" (p. 26). The current study has focused on the context of the Black American family and it has employed Community expectancy (Miller & Tuttle, 2006; Deggs & Miller, 2011A; 2011B; Miller & Deggs, 2012; Derden & Miller, 2014), an emerging theory, to explore Black American men's individual development and their decisions that led them to enroll in four-year post-secondary education programs.

Community expectancy has proposed that various constructs exists in the lives of all individuals who are members of communities, including members of families, transcends the "physical, cognitive, social, and cultural components" (p. 26) that can influence the college-going behavior of family members, particularly that of children and adolescents. Community expectancy contends that an individual has interactions among at least five constructs: 1) Formal Education Bodies; 2) Civic Agencies; 3) Informal Associations; 4) Religious Affiliations; and 5) Home Life, can influence an individual's identity development that can guide their life-roles and -decisions (Deggs & Miller, 2011A), including their decisions to enroll in public, four-year colleges. However, community expectancy has suggested that an individual's interactions with the environmental factors, or individuals, that exist in each construct, or sphere of influence, can "support or negate" college-going decisions, which are dependent on the expectations of the

factors, such as parents' expectations, which primarily function in the Home Life construct (Miller & Deggs, 2012), and intermittently in other constructs.

The Home Life construct includes the "family unit" that can embody various family structures, including nuclear ("traditional"), single-parent, and extended-family households. Additionally, this construct includes homes and facilities that are regulated by government, including foster homes or juvenile-related facilities. The Informal Associations construct can include peers, associates, and more loosely bonded relationships, including acquaintances. Religious Affiliations, include relationships that exist in religious typically formal institutions, such as churches, synagogues, mosques, and other settings where individuals seek spiritual enlightenment. Formal Education Bodies, can include public and private secondary and higher educational institutions, as well as other educational organizations (institutes, online education providers, etc.). Local governments as well as public and privately funded community-based organizations function in the Civic Agencies construct, which provides services to residents, and possibly non-residents in a city or neighborhood. Community expectancy's framework was constructed from multiple theoretical frameworks, including two forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) known as social capital and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000), as well as psychosocial development theory (Erickson, 1950), particularly identity formation, and life-course theory (Elder, 1994).

Based on Freud's psychoanalytic perspective (Berk, 2008), Erickson's (1950; 1968; 1982) psychosocial development proposed that individuals' personalities and identities are formed as they progress through a sequence of nine stages of human development throughout their lives, from birth to old age, or late adulthood. As people proceed through each stage, they experience a crises, which Erikson described as a psychological exertion to adapt to the demands

of the social environment (Garrett, 1995). The current study has focused on Erickson's (1968) fifth stage of development, Identity versus Role Confusion, which signifies the adolescence stage of an individual's life, typically in the 12 to 24 year old range (Sokol, 2009). During this stage of human development, adolescents try to understand their roles and views of themselves in their environments and they ask questions about their futures as they move into adulthood, as well as seek acceptance from others, which can cause role confusion about their undiscovered identities. This stage is the most critical for the formation of adolescent personalities and identities, even as they become adults. Elder (1998), described life-course theory as "the notion that changing lives alter developmental trajectories" (p. 1), and subsequently, this idea of time and place can impact how an emerging adolescent views possible futures.

Bourdieu (1986) introduced The Forms of Capital as a response to economic theory and what he characterized as the "economy of practices" (p. 242) or the "invention of capitalism" (p. 242), at the time a function of maximizing profit that benefited the "bourgeois" (p. 242) class of individuals and groups. These groups by definition had high-valued assets of monetary capital or other forms of non-monetary capital, including those attained from cultural and social capital, which also influenced various social and educational outcomes and opportunities for different groups of people. Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (2000) who were central to the theories of cultural and social capital, described how various individuals invested in social relations and networks, and how their investments in the social relations and networks produced various positive or negative returns, including educational and social outcomes. Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to a durable network" or group of people (p. 248). Putnam (2000) referred to social capital as the "connections among individuals" that included "norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness" that

established the existence of a social network that mutually benefited the members of the network, or social organization (p. 19). Putnam (2000) also described the importance of bonding social capital and bridging social capital as related to Granovetter's (1973; 1983) study of weak and strong ties. Flora, Flora, and Gasteyer (2016) described that bonding social capital consists of connections among individuals and groups with similar backgrounds, such as race, class, ethnicity, kinship, gender, or similar social characteristics, and that bridging social capital connected diverse groups within the community to each other and to groups outside of the community. There are many past research studies that have employed social capital and cultural capital theories, and have examined their influences on students' college-going decisions, including those that have been related to the college enrollment decisions of Black American men, and how various social capital and cultural capital variables have affected their decisions to attend four-year public colleges and universities.

According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, in the objectified state, and in the institutionalized state. Bourdieu (1986) described the embodied state as "in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (p. 243), which can include an individual's sense of culture, traditions, and norms (Winkle-Wagner, 2010). The objectified state involves cultural objects and media that one may own, including paintings, books, dictionaries, or other educational resources that are in the form of goods and services. The institutionalized state involves the recognition of academic credentials (Bourdieu, 1986) as well as of "particular tastes, norms, or values" (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, p. 6).

Cultural capital possession has been operationalized as students' participation in cultural activities; student's educational expectations; at-home educational or cultural resources; behavior toward their education; and work habits (Merolla & Jackson, 2014). Merolla and Jackson (2014)

described how Lareau's (2000; 2002) as well as Lareau and Horvat's (1999) scholarship, explained that cultural capital activation can be based on a social class position, or social stratification (Lareau, 1987). For instance, higher-classed individuals or families were shown not only to possess higher levels of cultural capital, but they activated it through their specific actions that they took to support their child's educational achievement, as well as their willingness to have sought assistance from others (Calarco, 2011) in an attempt to structure their child's educational outcomes.

Students' college enrollment decisions can vary and be influenced by several social capital variables, or environmental factors that function in each of the constructs, including people who are in close interaction with students in their home environments and can include family members who live inside the homes. There are also individuals outside of the home, including relatives or kin (Richardson, 2009; Goodman, & Silverstein, 2002; Gebre, & Taylor, 2017); neighbors (Manturuk, Lindblad, & Quercia, 2010; Mata & Pendakur, 2014); friends or associates of students' parents (Wallace, 2013); peer-networks (Tierney & Venegas, 2006; Cherng, Calarco, & Kao, 2013); members of the community (Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013), as well as, employees of government agencies who are associated with the well-being of students and families. Putnam (2000) found strong correlations between high social capital in families and positive child development and behavior. Literature has shown that family social capital has been a critical factor that has influenced students' college-going decisions and behavior.

Israel, Beaulieu, and Hartless, (2001) found that the process and structural attributes of family social capital affected students' educational achievement, and therefore, their progression to completing a college degree. Perna and Titus's (2005) multilevel multinomial analyses examined the relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment,

and found that even though that Black American students had a smaller probability of enrolling in a four-year college or university than other ethnic or racial groups, their probability of enrolling in a four-year college increased with the frequency of the discussions that parents and their children had about matters related to education. By employing multinomial logistic models, Sandefur, Meier, and Campbell (2006) found that as a mechanism to communicate high educational expectations to their children, parents' frequent discussions about school with their children were found to be significant factors that increased the probability of their children's enrollment in a four-year college.

Social capital in the form of family resources (Perna & Titus, 2005; Sandefur, Meier, & Campbell, 2006), can include parents' income and the time they must manage between work and home (Ciabattari, 2007), among other resources. Dominguez and Watkins (2003), found that for some parents, including financially struggling Black American mothers, social capital improved their opportunities for social mobility by developing relationships that helped them to attain advice and encouragement from others, as well as contacts through their relationships. Though research findings have shown that though a family's income has been a significant factor in the trajectory of children's educational achievement, descriptive and exploratory analyses Dixon-Roman (2012), found that the secondary achievement of middle income Black American males, there was a higher point different than was for those in poverty. However, according to Dixon-Roman (2012), parent's lack cultural capital that can be established by their type of occupation, could be offset by their participation or involvement in their child's educational tasks and endeavors. Palmer, Davis, and Maramba (2011), discovered that Black American families promoted their children's' success in college by role modeling the importance of educational attainment by pursuing education beyond the baccalaureate degree and sharing knowledge of

their enrollment and attendance experiences. Further, the parents that had formal education as well as those that had not completed a formal education acted as supporters and encourages toward their children's college success. Additionally, Kim and Schneider (2005), who employed a multinomial logistic regression analysis, found that the alignment of parents' and students' goals increased the probability of enrolling in a selective postsecondary college within the year after high-school graduation. Klevan, Weinberg, and Middleton (2016), who used logistic regression modeling, suggested that the social capital variables that were significant to students' college enrollment were student-to-parent variables, including academic discussions and structured activities; parent-to-parent variables, including benefits, such as information, and sustaining a relationship with their child's second best-friend's (not best or third-best friend) parents; and student-to-student variables, including the number of friends who dropped out of high school, number of friends who planned to enroll in a two-year college, and number of friends who planned to enroll in a four-year college.

Additionally, households with two parents who had cohesive relationships among other parents in their neighborhoods, were found to significantly influence their children's participation in extracurricular activities (An & Western, 2019). Sandefur, Meier, and Campbell (2006) examined the effects of social capital on college enrollment by employing multinomial logistic models, and even though family structure was not found to influence children's college enrollment outcomes, family size was found to be a significant factor in students' probability of attending a four-year post-secondary institution. Roksa and Deutschlander (2018), suggested that approximately 20% of the Socioeconomic Status (SES) gap in application undermatch, or the necessary tasks that students have completed during the application process to enroll in post-secondary programs, was related to family social and cultural capital.

There were few peer-reviewed research studies that focused on the influence of social capital from neighborhood factors on Black American men's educational experiences. Neighborhood social capital are resources that are inherent among various social networks in the communities where people reside (Carpiano, 2006; Carpiano & Kimbro, 2012). Putnam (2000), referred to neighborhood social capital as "monitoring, socializing, mentoring, and organizing" by individuals and groups in a community (p. 312). Mahatmya and Lohman (2012), found that increases in social capital that emerged from family and school during adolescence directly influenced students' civic participation in their community seven year later in their lives. The process and structural attributes of community social capital has been found to help youths to excel, however, it contributed less strongly to students' academic achievement (Israel, Beaulieu, & Hartless, 2001). The contextual differences that characterized the school or communities (Putnam, 2000; Kim & Nuñez, 2013), such as the neighborhood or community that the school operates in, and type of school (Blair, Burkhardt, & Hull, 2016; Byun, Meece, Irvin, Hutchins, 2012), such as the quality of education that students receive can influence social capital's role on students' college enrollment decisions (Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011).

The environmental factors that function in the Home Life construct, including students' parents, may interact with the environmental factors that function in other constructs. For instance, parents' interactions with public high-schools and colleges, which are environmental factors in the Formal Education Bodies construct, can be critical to their children's educational achievement and experiences. Additionally, parents may have interactions among other factors that operate in other constructs, including the Civic Agencies, Religious Affiliations, and Informal Associations constructs.

There are various environmental factors, including the people who function in students' high schools and their locations. Several of these variables can include high school counselors (Blaire, Burkhardt, & Hull, 2016; Adams, & Farmer-Hinton, 2006; Holland, 2015); teachers (Daly, Moolenaar, Der-Martirosian, & Liou, 2014); and extra-curricular activities (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008), including athletics (Richardson, 2012; Shifrer, Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2015; Clopton, 2011); school organizations (Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003; Kahne, & Spote, 2008) and after-school activities (Dotterer, McHale, & Crouter, 2007; Vickery, 2014). Ward, Strambler, & Linke (2013) found that university, school, and community partnerships of programs, such as Government Trio programs, including GEAR UP, have served to inform students and their parents with information about high school graduation requirements beginning in the 8th grade, as well as, elevate educational aspirations, reduce disciplinary behavior, and provide academic support that impact college-going behavior. Belasco (2013) found that consistent student-counselor interaction and visits were significant influences on four-year college enrollment for students from low SES backgrounds. Additionally, students' informal associations, including peer networks (Frank, Muller, & Mueller, 2013; Goza, & Ryabov, 2009), mentors (Putnam, 2000; Dahlvig, 2010; Butler, Evans, Brooks, Williams, & Bailey, 2013), and others in and outside of school campuses, have been found as factors that have influenced Black American men's decisions to attend college.

Putnam (2000)'s work discussed the importance of the role that "faith communities" serve in creating opportunities to form social networks that supports youth, including Black American male youth, to attain social capital that encourages their decisions to enroll in post-secondary programs (p. 66). Several quantitative research studies have shown how social and cultural capital has influenced Black American youth's college enrollment decisions. Al-Fadhli

and Kersen' (2010), results after their examination of data from 4, 273 8th and 10th grade Black American students' social networks, including their familial, religious, and cultural networks, family social capital and religious social capital, rather than cultural capital, were the most strongly associated with students' high college aspirations and future plans.

Several qualitative research studies also focused on the influence of students' religious affiliations on Black American students' educational success. Barrett (2010), found that several contextual factors among urban Black American church networks were critical to promoting the educational success of students, including by positive encouraging students' educational endeavors, the communication of high expectations to students; the celebration of students' educational successes; and providing role modeling to students. Further, Byfield (2008) found through semi-structured interviews, that the influence of Black American students' religious beliefs and involvement in religious communities, influenced their academic success. The results from Madyun and Lee's (2010) research study, which used OLS regression analysis of a sample of 944 Black American students, showed a connection between the social capital that students had attained from religious involvement and the communications that they had with their parents about school-related topics. Additionally, Butler-Barnes, Williams, and Chavous's (2011) research study used a correlational analyses of 158 Black American adolescent males, and found that there were strong connections that existed among their educational utility beliefs, high racial group pride, religiosity, and their academic performance. There are also research study results that have revealed that the religious involvement among Black American adolescents from households that do not accrue much income, correlated with school bonding and their closer connections with the teachers in their school (Kim, Harty, Takahashi, & Voisin, 2017).

There are many past research studies have examined social capital's influence on Black American male's education and college attendance. However, many have not produced the results and findings that significantly explain how various factors in Black American males' interactions with, and the expectations from factors in their immediate environments, influence their decisions to enroll in four-year higher education programs. Community expectancy, has been theoretically constructed as a framework by its foundations in social and cultural capital, psychosocial development theory, and life-course theory. The expectations from, and the interactions that Black American males have with their parents, are critical to exploring their parents' influence on their decisions to enroll in, as well as their attitudes and actions that have led them to attend colleges that awarded four-year Bachelor's degrees to students.

E. Policy Dimensions: College Access and Enrollment of Black American Men

The attendance and graduation rates of Black American men in four-year colleges has been consistently low, compared to other student populations (Shapiro, Dunder, Huie, Wakungu, Yuan, Nathan, & Hwang, 2017), which has been a policy issue that has impacted this underrepresented population of men, and the number of them who are awarded bachelor's degrees within a certain time range after their high school graduation. Several programs that are federally funded by the U.S. Department of Education have been designed to increase access, enrollment, and graduation rates of Black American men in higher education. Federally funded TRIO and GEAR UP programs have provided support and resources that are aimed to assist students to persist from middle school grade-levels to their attendance post-secondary education. Additionally, financial aid programs have been developed to assist students with financial resources to support their attendance in college. Affirmative action policies have guided the equal access to higher education admissions Programs that have supported the college attendance

of underrepresented students, including Black American males, have been administered under the legal guidance of affirmative action policies, which promote students' equal access to colleges and universities, and their completion of post-secondary degrees.

TRIO, includes eight programs that have been aimed to deliver educational services to students who come from unique circumstances. Many students who participated in TRIO programs have been identified as the first in their families to attend college (i.e., first-generation college students), raised in families whose taxable income is at or below poverty levels, have disabilities, are homeless, in or aging-out of foster care facilities, and other distinctive situations. Several programs have been administered to provide students with skills and resources that are necessary for success in post-secondary education.

Three Upward Bound programs have distinct goals to encourage students' success in secondary and post-secondary education. The goal of the Upward Bound (UB) program has been to increase the rate of students who complete secondary education, and enroll in, and graduate from with a higher education degree. The Upward Bound Math-Science (UBMS) program was developed to strengthen students' math and science skills and to encourage them to pursue college degrees in STEM careers. The Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) program was designed to increase the rate of veterans who enroll in higher education institutions. TRIO programs, including Talent Search (TS) and Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) programs have been developed to assist students who live in circumstances that present challenges to persistence in secondary and higher education.

The Talent Search program has identified students who live in deprived circumstances and vulnerable situations, and who have the potential to succeed in post-secondary education. The program was designed to encourage students to persist in secondary and post-secondary

education, and re-enter high school, or re-enroll in college if they have withdrawn from their respective schools. The primary goal of the EOC program has been to increase the number of adults who enroll in higher education. Students who are enrolled in college can also benefit from TRIO programs including, Student Support Services (SSS), a program that has focused on the increase of retention and graduation rates among college students. Qualified students who have aspired to complete a graduate degree, can participate in the Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program, which has been designed to increase the attainment of Ph.D. degrees by students from underrepresented student populations. Because of the expertise that is required to provide a variety of services to TRIO participants, the Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs, has supported training to enhance the skills of project directors and staff. Although, public school districts and colleges can apply for competitive grants in order to establish TRIO programs for students, state governments, in addition, can apply for funds to help increase students' access to post-secondary education.

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), a discretionary grant program that provides six-year grants to states, and organizations that partner with states, to fund services and scholarships to students who attend high-poverty middle and high schools. The goal of GEAR UP has been to increase the number of students from low-income backgrounds who are prepared to attend and succeed in college. Grantees have been required to serve cohorts of students beginning no later than the seventh grade, and to report their progress through high school. The U.S. Department of Education, in an effort to understand the impact of TRIO programs and GEAR UP on students' post-secondary enrollment, retention, and graduation, have provided descriptive statistics of several programs in order to show their performance outcomes.

Performance outcomes of UB, UBMS, SSS, and TS programs have shown various results among the rate of students who enrolled in college, as compared to those who graduated with a bachelor's degree. A high percentage of students applied for financial aid, enrolled in and persisted in four-year colleges, however; a significantly low number of students, particularly males and Black American students, graduated with a bachelor's degree within six years of their initial enrollment period (U.S. Department of Education, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2016A; 2016B). Performance outcomes for GEAR UP and the Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs have not been available by the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2019A; 2019B). Policy designs of TRIO and GEAR UP programs have been administered nationally in order to help increase access to education for students who historically are members of underserved student populations, according to their ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Students' attendance in college can comprise a variety of costs, including students' tuition and fees, housing, books and supplies, transportation, and living costs, which can include food, healthcare, and childcare. Federal student aid has been a significant financial resource for underrepresented students, including Black American men, to access post-secondary education. Primarily, three types of aid, including grants, work-study positions, and loans, have been awarded to students who qualify for funds that can be used to pay for college. Needs-based grants, including the Federal Pell Grant and the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), have assisted students who have not earned a bachelors' degree with financial support to help pay for expenses. Work-study provides part-time employment positions on and off campus for students with financial need to attend college. Students and parents can also apply for low-interest loans to assist with paying for costs towards their degree, however; unlike

grants, funds received from loans must be paid back to the federal government. Financial aid programs have been designed to help students pay for expenses related to their attendance in post-secondary education, but many times, has not covered the full expenses towards completion of college degree. For instance, the amount of funds awarded to students from the Federal Pell Grant have remained constant for years, while tuition costs and inflation have risen, which has left many students in debt after they graduated with a bachelor's degree.

Affirmative action policies in higher education has been critical because of the low college enrollment and graduation rates of Black American men. Because of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board I*, holding that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, and in *Brown v. Board II*'s ruling that the implementation should take all deliberate speed, legal precedent was held for future cases that focused on integration of other social institutions, including post-secondary education. The Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board I* and *II* protected minority students from unequal treatment in the form of segregation. It helped establish a foundation to future cases, such as *Grutter v. Bollinger* that would confirm using race in college admissions policies to increase diversity and promote equal access. Because of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Graz v. Bollinger*, higher education institutions may development and implement affirmative action policies to increase minority enrollment on their campuses, which was reinforced by the Court in *Fisher v. Texas* (Brazelton, 2014). On the contrary, several states have designed and administered policies that have annulled race as a factor in admissions-based programs, which has contradicted affirmative action policies that have supported students from underrepresented populations, including Black American men.

F. Chapter Summary

There is a growing literature base on diverse student experiences in higher education, and even the programs and pathways that are in place to help these populations get to college, but this literature has not explained how students' interactions with factors in their immediate environment influences decisions for post-secondary enrollment. The current literature review included materials focused on Black American men in college; parental influence on individual development and college enrollment behavior; Tolerance for Disagreement; community expectancy; and policy dimensions of Black American college attainment. The low enrollment of Black American men has been the focus of many government policies that have been designed to increase college attendance of this population of men. However, much research focused on Black American males has not resulted in a significant increase in enrollment and completion. This review of related literature reinforced the need of the study to seek to understand the enabling factors for Black American men to pursue higher education.

Chapter III. Research Methodology

With little change over the past three decades of Black American men enrollment and persistence in higher education, there is a need to better understand how this population decides to pursue this opportunity. Higher education completion has repeatedly been linked to many personal and societal benefits, including higher employment rates, financial earning, better quality of life, fewer chronic health problems, relationship stability, and lower rates of incarceration. Although several studies and programs have been designed to help Black American men stay enrolled and graduate from college, few have made an attempt to look at the personal experiences of this population in deciding to pursue higher education. Therefore, the purpose for conducting the study will be to identify enabling factors that are perceived to encourage Black American men to enroll in postsecondary education.

Research methodology for the current study included the administration of the McCroskey Tolerance for Disagreement scale and personal interviews with Black American men who are enrolled in college. The qualitative portion of the study used an interpretation of social constructivism and a qualitative research methodology, specifically transcendental phenomenology. The chapter included philosophical assumptions; an interpretive framework; a research approach; ethical considerations; role of the researcher; research procedures; data collection; data analysis; validation of findings; and the chapter summary.

A. Philosophical Assumptions

The articulation and design of this study were guided by four philosophical assumptions that, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), have guided qualitative research studies that have been published during the past 20 years, ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. These philosophical assumptions have also been termed by some researchers as epistemologies

and ontologies (Crotty, 1998); general research methods (Neuman, 2000), and alternative knowledge claims (Creswell, 2014).

Ontology, questions the “nature of reality and its characteristics,” meaning that the study’s research questions and design should be guided by exploring the multiple perspectives and lived experiences of research participants, such as Black American men and those that were raised in single-parent families, in order to report the various themes that emerge from participants’ personal reflections and descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.20).

Epistemology is guided by the relevant and justifiable nature of knowledge. The researcher gains knowledge through the subjective experiences of a study’s participants. The qualitative study’s research design and the employment of research procedures should permit the researcher to relate to the context of the participants and seek to lessen the “distance” and “objective separateness” between the researcher and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1988, p. 94). Further, researchers should collaborate with and devote time with their participants in hopes to gain more knowledge of them and their contexts, and to gain access to collect subjective data that can be analyzed to explore a phenomenon.

The axiological assumption is apparent in a research study when the investigators identify their “positionality” by “positioning themselves” relative to the contextual nature of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). The personal characteristics of researchers, such as their demographics, experiences, values, beliefs, and ideologies can impact the research study, therefore; researchers should report the presence of biases and “value-laden” aspects within various components of the research study, such as research design, research procedures, and the interpretation of findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). The methodology, or the research

procedures of a study, follow an inductive process that permits the emergence of data gathered from various sources, and is shaped by the research expertise of the investigator.

B. Interpretive Framework

Social Constructivism

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), social constructivism, often described as interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mertens, 2015), seeks to explore and understand the world from multiple perspectives by generating and inductively developing theories or patterns from subjective meanings that individuals have constructed through their lived experiences (Berger & Luekmann, 1966; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2003; Mertens (2015); Burr, 2015). Social constructivists have commonly chosen research procedures that permit participants to construct the meaning attached to their past experiences and situations in order to communicate descriptions of those experiences. The researchers, then analyze emerging data and interpret findings “to make sense of” the meaning that participants have about the world, and attempt to understand their experiences through a lens of multiple realities while accounting for personal biases, values, and beliefs.

C. Research Approach

Qualitative Methodology

Creswell and Poth (2018) wrote that a qualitative methodology should be considered when a complex, detailed understanding of an issue or problem is needed; the need or desire to empower individuals exists; a literary, flexible style of research reporting is suitable; an understanding of the contexts in which participants in a study address an issue or problem is warranted; a follow-up explanation of mechanisms about quantitative findings is sought; a theory

to address gaps in understandings is developed; and when a lack of fit between quantitative measures and the problem exists.

A qualitative methodology has been identified as the most appropriate research method to explore and understand the meaning that Black American men ascribe to their experiences with post-secondary matriculation. A qualitative approach is necessary to identify the variables that enable Black American men to enroll in and persist through college, and graduate with a degree.

Additionally, a qualitative research methodology permitted participants within vulnerable populations such as Black American men who were raised in single-parent households, to offer multiple perspectives and perceptions about the role and power of parental influence in the decision to enroll in college. Prior research has found that a student's family, a critical component within one's immediate bio-ecological environment, can impact a student's choice of post-secondary institutions (Engle, 2007; Stage & Hossler, 1989), however; additional data is warranted to understand the influential enabling features that single-parents, guardians, or other immediate or extended family members offer to the progression of their children's enrollment and persistence in college. Therefore, a qualitative approach is necessary to understand the experiences that students ascribe to their process of navigating and transitioning from high school to post-secondary education.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that permits investigators to access the world through the ordinary experiences of individuals (van Manen, 2014). Heidegger (2010) eloquently stated that the meaning of phenomenology was "to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself" (p. 32). The use of a phenomenological approach is appropriate when a research study has been designed to "describe the essence of a lived

experience” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 81). According to van Manen, a phenomenological researcher, “almost always” begins a research study with “wonder,” a disposition that “dislocates and displaces us” from “superficial” and passive thinking (van Manen, 2014, p. 37). For instance, the disposition of wonder, as opposed to curiosity, is a deep, and “transports us into the beginning of genuine thinking” (Heidegger, 1994, p. 143). In contrast to van Manen’s hermeneutical phenomenology, in which focuses on the researcher’s interpretation of the meaning of lived experiences within various informational texts, Moustakas’s (1994), phenomenological approach, focuses less on the interpretations of meaning by researchers and more on the descriptions of experiences and meaning ascribed by research study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transcendental Phenomenology

Borrowing from Husserl’s (2012) scholarship first published in 1931, Moustakas’s transcendental phenomenological approach involves adherence to a systematic process and guidelines for the execution of research procedures. Epoche, Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction, and Imaginative Variation are the three core processes within Moustakas’s methodology that “facilitate derivation of knowledge” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). The methods that will be executed within each core process will be documented in the Role of the Researcher, Research Procedures, and Data Collection sections of this paper.

Epoche, a Greek term, means “to refrain from judgment” and “to abstain from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things” in the world that we live in (p. 33). Moustakas, stated that Husserl described the Epoche as “the freedom from suppositions” (van Manen, 2014, p. 85). Though Moustakas accepted that perfectly achieving the Epoche will be seldom, however, he explained that the importance of practicing this process is its aim to reduce the

influence of preconceived thoughts, judgements, and knowledge of those conducting the research study. The biases, values, prejudices, and dispositions, and egos that may exist among researchers must be “set aside”, and with a new, fresh, and open viewpoint, revisit phenomena with a “pure ego” and perception (pp. 33-34).

During the Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction process, a textural description of meaning and essence of phenomena are generated by research participants. From a fresh and clear perspective, the investigator analyzes data by reducing the information given by the participants into themes, and then forms a written textual description of the lived experiences and perspectives described by the participants. The information or evidence collected by the researcher may derive from, for instance, the statements or quotes given by participants when describing their lived experiences in interviews or the notations that the researcher or participants have written in journals.

The objective of the Imaginative Variation process is to present “a picture of the conditions that precipitate an experience and connect with it” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 35). This process permits the researcher to articulate structural themes from the textural descriptions of phenomenon written in during the Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction process. Creswell and Poth (2018), described that structural descriptions are sought to explore how research participants experience phenomena “in terms of the conditions, situations, or context” they were in while undergoing the phenomena (p. 78).

Pereira (2012), in study referenced by Creswell and Poth (2018), discussed the procedural steps that investigators should complete during the conduction of phenomenological research. These steps instruct the researcher to: determine if the research problem is best examined by using a phenomenological approach; identify a phenomenon of interest to study, and describe it;

distinguish and specify the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology; collect data from the interviews who have experienced the phenomenon by using in-depth and multiple interviews; generate themes from the analysis of significant statements; develop textural and structural descriptions; report the essence of the phenomenon by using a composite description; and present the understanding of the essence of the experience in written form.

D. Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting my study, I reviewed the code of ethics from professional associations, such as the ethical standards published by the American Educational Research Association (AERA). I also sought consultation from the University of Arkansas' Office of Research Compliance (RSCP) about the various approvals and permissions that I obtained from my academic institution, potential research sites, participants, and other individuals or entities.

Approvals and Permissions

Approval from the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought prior to the initiation of conducting the research for the study (Appendix A). The University's IRB "recommends policies, and monitors their implementation, on the use of human beings as subjects for physical, mental and social experimentation, in and out of class. Policies recommended are in keeping with the guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, other federal agencies, and the Belmont Report.

Research Study Participants

I will provide each participant with a consent form (Appendix B) that will be required for participating in the study. Its contents will include the identification of the researcher; identification of the sponsoring institution; identification of the purpose of the study; identification of the benefits for participating in the study; identification of the level and type of

participant involvement in the study; a notation of risks to the participant; a guarantee of confidentiality to the participant; an assurance that the participant can withdraw from the study at any time; and a list of names of persons to contact if questions arise (Sarantakos, 2013).

E. Role of the Researcher

As the researcher that will conduct this study, I will bracket or “set aside” my experiences, in order to view phenomena under examination with a fresh, unbiased perspective (Moustakas, 1994, p.33). By entering the Epoche process, I will position myself by viewing the world from a transcendental perspective. Moustakas described the meaning of transcendental as “in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time (1994, p. 34). Creswell and Poth (2018) have further described this process as “reflexivity”, meaning that investigators “position themselves” during the conduction of a qualitative research study by discussing their background, and how it may inform their interpretations of collected information (p. 44). Further, researchers are advised to discuss their motivations for conducting the study and report what they “personally stand to gain from” the research “study” (Wolcott, 2010, p. 36).

Despite Moustakas’s admission that “some entities are simply not bracketable,” the Epoche will offer me a process for “potential renewal”, and thus will be a critical component of my research study (1994, p. 90). Because of the difficulty for individuals to bracket their personal experiences, Creswell and Poth, who borrowed from LeVasseur (2003), suggested a new definition for epoche or bracketing, “such as suspending our understandings in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity” (2018, p. 81).

As a Black American man who was primarily raised by a single-mother, and who has graduated with an undergraduate and master’s degree, I potentially may have particular familiarities, biases, or emotions that could influence or impact the research procedures that are

selected and executed in my study. Under this heading, according to the guidelines set by Moustakas during the Epoche process, I will explain “how” various personal experiences and perspectives could influence my study and the steps that will be necessary for me to bracket or position myself prior to, during, and after the conduction of this study. Because the Epoche is a process, the more in-depth information that should appear in this section will be available to document in the near future.

F. Research Procedures

Recruitment and Sampling Procedures

According to Polkinghorne (1989), 5-25 individuals that share similar phenomenon, or experiences, should suffice as a suitable number of participants to interview in order to collect the information needed to document the perspectives of participants and analyze the phenomena they experienced during their transition from high-school to enrolling in and graduating with a post-secondary degree. Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018), discussed how they had seen the number of participants in phenomenological studies range from “1” to “365”, however, they stated that Duke (1984), recommended the selection of 3 to 10 participants (p. 159).

I will use a purposeful sampling method to intentionally select participants who will be identified as: (a) Black American, (b) self-identify as a male, (c) currently enrolled as a full-time undergraduate student at one of the pre-selected institutions, and (d) agrees to participate in the study. By choosing participants from similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds, information will be gathered that will provide insight about the college enrollment and attendance experiences of Black American men.

Setting

Black American men from 7 post-secondary institutions in the Mid-west/Mid-south were sought to be included in the study. These institutions were selected based on their convenience to the researcher and their willingness to assist in identifying men to participate in the study. A goal of 3-5 men from each location will be recruited, and although the total number of men included to be interviewed will not be determined until the process has begun, the goal will be to continue conducting interviews until data reach a point of saturation, or repetition of themes.

The possible colleges to be included in the study were:

Northeastern State University: A comprehensive public university located in Tahlequah, Oklahoma of approximately 8,500 students. NSU reports an enrollment of 4% Black Americans on their campus, and 52% of their entire campus enrollment has been reported as underrepresented populations.

Oklahoma State University: A research university located in Stillwater, Oklahoma of approximately 26,000 students. Of their total enrollment, 34% come from underrepresented populations and a total of 4% were identified as Black American.

Missouri Southern State University: A comprehensive, regional university serving primarily southwestern Missouri and located in Joplin, the university enrolls approximately 5,700 students. MSSU reported 6% of their total enrollment as Black American and 25% of their total enrollment has come from underrepresented populations.

Pittsburg State University: A comprehensive regional university in southeastern Kansas, the rurally located university enrolls approximately 6,900 students. With 22% of their total enrollment identifying as coming from a diverse background, 3% of the total enrollment reported their ethnicity as Black American.

University of Arkansas: A research university located in Fayetteville, Arkansas, the university serves approximately 28,000 students. One-quarter of the U.A. enrollment self-reported coming from a diverse background and a total of 4% self-reported being of Black American ethnicity.

University of Arkansas at Fort Smith: A relatively new comprehensive university located in mid-western Arkansas, the university enrolls approximately 6,600 students. U.A.F.S. reported a total of 4% of Black American enrollment and 34% of their enrollment coming from underrepresented populations.

University of Central Oklahoma: A comprehensive, regional university located in the Oklahoma City suburb of Edmond. With a suburban campus and setting, the institution enrolls approximately 16,000 students. U.C.O. reported 45% of their student enrollment coming from diverse backgrounds and a total of 9% being Black American.

G. Data Collection

Research Instrument

The first data collection element included the administration of Tolerance for Disagreement scale to participants. This instrument (Appendix C) includes 15 items that ask participants to rate their agreement to disagreement with various statements. The scale has a reliability alpha of .85. The five-point Likert-type scale (5=Strongly Agree progressing to 1=Strongly Disagree) results in a score between 15 and 75. Scores below 32 indicate low levels of tolerance for disagreement, scores between 32 and 46 indicate moderate tolerance of disagreement, and scores above 46 indicate a high tolerance for disagreement. The study will therefore explore whether or not Black American men have a higher tolerance for disagreement,

suggesting that they have an ability to confront their social environments and ‘disagree’ with what might be considered their social norms.

Data were collected through a structured interview protocol that included open-ended interview questions, prompts and probes, will be created to collect relevant data from interview participants (Moustakas, 1994). Further, I documented the non-verbal communication that participants displayed while they described their experiences in order to analyze the accuracy and authenticity of statements later during the data analysis process. I developed the instrument that contained sufficient space for me to write notations on each page. In the appendix, I have included the interview protocol that was developed and used to collect information from participants (Appendix D).

Interviews

The interviews were expected to last 40 to 60 minutes in duration and each participant will choose the time and date that is most convenient for their interview. In ascending order, Creswell and Poth, summarized the “procedures for preparing and conducting qualitative interviews” (2018, pp.165-166).

Research Documentation

I used journaling to keep notes about statements, cues, or ideas that relate to phenomena. Additionally, I distributed and later collected journals that might have included any additional information that participants provide about their lived experiences. I also explored collected any other written documents from participants that related to their experiences with phenomena.

Data Collection Steps

Step 1

The research protocol was submitted to the University of Arkansas IRB for approval.

Step 2

Once the Tolerance for Disagreement (TD) scale and interview protocol were approved, I contacted individuals at each of the institutions listed previously asking them to help identify 3-5 Black American men who meet the criteria identified earlier in this chapter. These campus contacts were individuals who are either known to the researcher or the researcher's advisor who were in an administrative capacity at each of the institutions. The contact was made using either email or telephone calls.

Step 3

Once the names of individuals were identified, I contacted each person to set up an interview date and time. Every effort was made to conduct interviews at each campus on the same day. Locations were projected to vary, and might have possibly included local coffee shops, libraries, or if possible, private meeting rooms identified in collaboration with the campus contact.

Step 4

Each meeting was planned to begin with a disclosure of the consent agreement (Appendix B). Once this is signed, each individual was to be given the Tolerance for Disagreement survey (Appendix C). The researcher was scheduled to leave the room while the participant completes the survey (Appendix D). Once that was completed, the interview was to be conducted, with the researcher both audio recording the interview and taking field notes.

Step 5

Immediately following the completion of each interview, the researcher planned to take 10-15 minutes to journal about the interview experience, making notes of non-verbal cues or innuendos observed or heard from the participant.

H. Data Analysis (Interpretation and Evaluation)

Data from the Tolerance for Disagreement scale has a prescribed scoring protocol. McCroskey described this as summing the responses to certain items (Step 1, survey questions 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 14, and 15) and summing other survey items (Step 2, question numbers 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13, and then adding 48 to the sum of step 1 and subtracting the sum of step 2.

The survey responses, along with the interview data, will be coded for students who self-reported being from a single parent family. This coding of data will then be used in answering the research questions.

Creswell and Poth (2018) discussed the phenomenological model that Moustakas (1994), who modified the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, advanced in his work. Creswell and Poth's (2018) simplified version of Moustakas's method will be used during the data analysis process of my study. Further, Pereira's (2012) procedures for conducting a phenomenological study will be applied when I analyze the data collected from research participants. I will also use data analysis methods, such as the Data Analysis Spiral that Creswell and Poth has recommended in their scholarship. It offers instructions to manage and organize data, read and memo emergent ideas, describe and classify codes into themes, develop and assess interpretations, and represent and visualize data (2018, pp. 185-198). Creswell (2014) also discussed coding techniques to analyze qualitative data, however; Saldana (2016) has devoted an entire text that described the various coding methods used in qualitative research. In this section of my dissertation, I will include a discussion of each instruction and how I applied it to my study. For example, I will discuss how interview transcriptions of audio recordings will be typed to provide a coherent and comprehensive view of participant responses. And, how those transcriptions will be analyzed into themes.

Validation of Findings

According to Primeau (2012), reflexivity is a key activity that assists a researcher to identify potential influences that could enter the research process. Creswell (2014) highlighted the importance of using validation strategies when conducting qualitative research methods. Validation standards, including bracketing, will be used to minimize researcher bias and view phenomenon from a fresh and neutral perspective to allow emerging information to guide data analysis (Moustakas, 1994; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Using a reflexive journal is also suggested by Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, and Poole (2004) with helping to identify areas of potential researcher bias to minimize their influence by bracketing them (Ahern, 1999). Triangulation of multiple data sources will be applied by note-taking in an interviewer's journal, member-checking (Hays & Singh, 2012; Glesne, 2016), collaborating with participants (Patton, 2015), and generating rich, thick descriptions to provide detail and promote transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 2010). Procedures to ensure reliability included establishing a code list and sharing it with each researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018), applying the code list or book to typed transcriptions to compare with each researcher's interpretation of emergent themes found through analysis of data gathered from participant feedback.

I. Chapter Summary

The chapter provided an overview of the research methodology and procedures that will be used in completing the study. Qualitative research techniques will be used to collect data from participants about their experiences thinking about enrolling in college, and in specific, the role of their family and community in making this decision. Participants, who will come from 7 regional universities in close proximity to me as the researcher, will also be administered McCroskey's Tolerance for Disagreement scale to understand these individual's willingness to

possible confront those in their family or community who resist their desire to pursue a college education.

Chapter IV. Findings

The enrollment of Black American students, particularly men, has not significantly increased in postsecondary education. Although other minority populations have increased in enrollment, the enrollment of Black American men has not increased, and the result is that as a subgroup of the US population, they remain less competitive for a number of jobs and do not enjoy the same level of quality of life indicators that come with college graduation. The resulting negative outcomes for Black American men include employment in low-wage jobs, unemployment, higher chances of incarceration, and lower levels of life satisfaction, all furthering social and racial problems in the United States. The current study was designed to identify why Black American men did decide to enroll in college, hopefully finding key strategies or enabling factors that can lead to greater enrollment for Black American men with the subsequent benefits of having a higher percentage of this subpopulation as college graduates.

The current chapter begins with a summary of the study, and then includes the findings of the study, the results from interviews, and data analysis. The summary of the study provides an overview of the rationale and purpose of the study, including the research methodology used. Additionally, the results of interviews, including a description of research study participants and the procedures used to capture data from participants' responses are provided, along with the procedures that were used by the researcher to analyze data. Data were organized and presented by research question.

A. Summary of the Study

The study explored a particular phenomenon, enabling factors in Black American men's environments that encouraged their decision to enroll in four-year, non-minority serving institutions. The enrollment of Black American men in these institutions has shown to be

unequal, placing them at a disadvantage in society, as compared to students who identify from other ethnicities. The outcome of this lower enrollment rate has subsequently resulted in different levels and kinds of opportunities for the individuals, their families, and their communities. The problems associated with a lower education segment of the population result in fewer economic opportunities, but also, a compounding of the problem as fewer young Black American men see peers or role models as college graduates, making the decision to enroll in college even more difficult.

An additional element to the problem of enrolling Black American men is the role of the family, including nuclear families, single parent families, and other parent families. In particular, research has demonstrated that single parent families have different levels of support that can be provided to children, and often the time that can be devoted to a child can be diffused, meaning that there is more that the single parent has to take on to run the family household, often taking time away from the attention that can be given to a child. The current study attempted to describe what might be unique in single parent families that prompted Black American men from these backgrounds to enroll in college.

The purpose for conducting the study was to identify enabling factors that were perceived to encourage Black American men to enroll in postsecondary education. An important element in this research was the role of the family, specifically single parent households.

B. Results of Interviews

Once the research protocol was submitted and approved by the University of Arkansas IRB, personal contacts were made with the six different universities in Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma previously identified to ask for their assistance with identifying participants to interview for the study. A total of 8 participants from two universities in

Arkansas were ultimately interviewed, and each included the completion of the McCroskey Tolerance for Disagreement survey. The distribution of participants' range of academic classifications were: 0 freshman, 3 sophomores, 2 juniors, and 3 seniors. Each interview was planned to last 30 - 45 minutes, however, the interviews ranged greatly in how long they lasted. Interviews lasted, in minutes, 1) 58.42, 2) 42.16, 3) 51.23, 4) 36.32, 5) 28.29, 6) 75.15, 7) 59.33, 8) 51.43 and an average of 59.29 minutes for all interviews.

Once the interviews were completed, transcriptions of the audio-recordings were organized in a word processing file, and hand-analyzed in order to be "close to the data and have a hands-on feel to it" (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 240). Additionally, I conducted a preliminary exploratory analysis (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) to explore the data, which included written memos about the information taken from the transcriptions, the field notes that I took during each interview, and the journal entries that I wrote after the completion of each interview.

The eight interviews included the following participants: interview Participant A enrolled in college in the Fall, 2015 semester until he transferred to his current college approximately 150 miles from his home in the Fall, 2017 semester. The participant was a senior, was an organizational leadership major, and had cumulated an approximate overall 2.5 GPA at the time he participated in the study. He was raised in a single parent family.

Interview Participant B enrolled in a college in the Fall 2018 semester in his hometown. He was a sophomore, was a business administration major, and had cumulated an approximate overall 3.6 GPA at the time he participated in the study. He was raised in a nuclear family.

Interview Participant C enrolled in college in the Fall 2015 semester approximately 187 miles from his home. The participant was a senior, was a biology major and a business

Administration minor, and had cumulated an approximate overall 2.5 GPA at the time he participated in the study. He was raised in a nuclear family.

Interview Participant D enrolled in college in the Fall 2018 semester approximately 187 miles from his home. The participant was a sophomore, was a biology major, and had cumulated an approximate overall 3.0 GPA at the time he participated in the study. He was raised in a nuclear family.

Interview Participant E enrolled in college in the Fall 2016 semester approximately 187 miles from his home. The participant was a junior, was an entrepreneurship and accounting double-major, and had cumulated an approximate overall 2.57 GPA at the time he participated in the study. He was raised in a single parent family.

Interview Participant F enrolled in college in the Fall 2015 semester approximately 187 miles from his home. The participant was a senior, was a sport management major, and had cumulated an approximate overall 3.1 GPA at the time he participated in the study. He was raised in a single parent family.

Interview Participant G enrolled in his previous college in the Fall 2009 semester as a part-time student and he enrolled in the same college in the Fall, 2010 semester as a full-time student. His family moved to several locations until he enrolled in a community college as a full-time student and transferred to a four-year college as a full-time student approximately 21 miles from his home. He was senior, was a political science major, and cumulated an approximate overall 2.28 GPA at the time he participated in the study. He was raised in a nuclear family.

Interview Participant H enrolled in college in the Fall 2018 semester in his hometown and transferred to his current college in the Fall, 2019 semester approximately 902 miles from his

home. He was a sophomore, was a business management major, and cumulated an approximate overall 3.2 GPA at the time he participated in the study. He was raised in a nuclear family.

As a note preceding the data analysis, I decided to not create pseudonyms for participants for several reasons. First, with the structure of the interviews, relevant responses to each question came from different parts of the interviews, resulting in many individual statements and brief comments. By not separating these statements by individual, the narrative to answer each question was able to be presented more clearly. Second, the intent of the study included finding broad answers that ultimately might lead to policy frameworks, and presenting the data in a broader context aided in this process. And third, the individuals from single-parent families was first included in the broad analysis, and then separated to highlight their voices.

C. Data Analysis

Research Question 1: How did Black American male college students describe their personal experiences that led them to enroll and persist in pursuing a college education?

Several questions in the interview protocol asked students to describe their personal experiences with various factors that led them to enroll in college, and persist in their pursuit of completing a bachelor's degree. Three themes were found from data collected from interviews with participants which were relevant to answering the study's first research question. There were two questions that focused on the personal experiences that students had with variables that led them to enroll in college, which were placed in the beginning of the interview protocol. The next three questions focused on students' personal experiences with variables that led them to persist and stay in college. Further, prompts were added to each question in order to probe students' memories and responses to clarify and expand on participant comments. The final question in the interview protocol gave students the opportunity to offer additional information

that may not been covered in the previous interview questions, but that they believed was important about their personal experiences that influenced their decisions to attend and graduate from college. The three themes that were identified in the data included involvement related to academics and community; people make a difference, and motivation as a vehicle to enrollment and persistence.

Theme # 1: Involvement Related to Academics and Community

Most of the students who participated in the study talked about how their involvement in programs and organizations related to academics, as well as those in their community, played a significant role in their decision to attend college. Some students discussed that their involvement in pre-college enrollment programs and classes gave them a chance to learn about college and receive information related to enrollment in college. One student said “the mentors in my TRIO program taught us about financial aid and scholarships that could help us pay for college. We also would practice filling out college applications so we would know what to do when we had to fill out the real ones.” Another student said

I was in programs during the Summer that would take us to stay on a college campus. It gave me the experience to see what a college campus looked like and how it would be to go to class every day. We would eat in a cafeteria on the campus and have different activities that taught us what college would be like. I got a chance to meet students from other schools too.

Another student stated, “ The TRIO program at my high school helped me think about going to college and which type of college that I wanted to go to. Some students talked about going to a black school and others wanted to go to schools where there were students from other races and cultures.” Another participant also stated “ASAP scholarships help me with financial aid and filling out applications for scholarships so I would have enough funds to pay for school, because I didn’t know how I would pay for things like my tuition, books, housing, and meal plans.” One

student discussed, “My mom made me take a class that taught me how to take the ACT. I felt like it helped me make a higher score than if I didn’t take the class. Most of my friends struggled on the ACT more than I did, and didn’t make a high enough score to get into a lot of schools, especially the large colleges.”

Interestingly, all of the participants discussed how their involvement in programs at their colleges have helped them persist on their way to graduation. Each participant believed that their involvement in a program or office at their college has helped them to navigate the college experience, and has given them the support they believe they need to persist to graduation, including opportunities to socialize with other underrepresented students. One student stated,

the New Student and Family Programs office at school helped me survive my first year in school and gave me a chance to meet new friends. They were nervous about being in a big college just like I was. We are all still in school, still friends, and we still help each other make it through school and when challenges come up in our lives. I also liked the chance to meet students from different places and see how we were different but in the same situation because we were all new students.

Some students also discussed how their involvement in events that have been sponsored by offices and departments on-campus have supported their attendance and have been critical to their persistence in college. A student said “I have attended Cardinal Nights and it was good for me to see people that look like me and go through some of the same experiences that I go through on campus. The games and different activities were fun and gave us a space where we can socialize and make connections with other students.” One participant also stated “there are volunteer centers on-campus that give me the chance to help other people. I like to give back and it gives me a chance to do that while I go to school.” And another participant said “I like the Emerging Leaders program because it teaches students how to be professionals and work with

other people. I learned teamwork and networking skills that I would not have learned if I was not involved with the program.”

Emphasizing diversity resources on his campus, a student stated “the multicultural center is a place where students can feel involved with the university and it’s somewhere we know we can find each other and connect with other. I mostly feel that I am a part of the university when I’m there. Sometimes that will announce events or meetings that we can go to that makes me feel like I’m a part of something important and bigger than just me.” One participant said “the off-campus events that are a part of the university are also fun to go to because they are in the community instead of only being on-campus. It gives us a chance to be somewhere different and meet leaders and people in the community that we don’t get to see on-campus. I hope that they have more of those we can participate in.”

Some participants also discussed how their involvement in organizations on-campus helped them persist and have a better experience at school. One participant stated “being able to be MPSA president gave me another purpose while in school, and has taught me how to be a leader. I think it will help me learn some skills that I will need after I graduate.” Another student stated “I’m a member of the National Black Accounting organization in the college of business and it has motivated me to stay in my major and helped me realize that I’m on the right path. It has helped me to learn about the different career opportunities that I will have after I graduate.” Several of the participants discussed how their membership in Greek organizations has given them a way to persist in college.

Some students discussed how involvement in their communities influenced their decision to enroll in college, and has motivated them to persist to graduate. “I liked to volunteer in my community at home because it gave me something constructive to do when I wasn’t in school. I

didn't play sports so it was my outlet, and I wanted to help my community in some way. I knew that going to college would give me the opportunity that I would need to come back and help my community in the way I think it needs." Another participant stated

I have always been active in my church and would always attend church events with my mom. People in my church would always talk to me about going to college. They sponsored a special event at church when me and other students graduated from high school. Different people talked about continuing our education by going to college when they spoke during the program. Now, the same people ask about how I'm doing in school and that I make them proud that I will graduate with my degree. They make me feel good about what I'm doing. They keep me motivated to finish.

Theme # 2: People Make a Difference

Most of the students who participated in the study talked about the people who made a difference in their decision to enroll in college and have encouraged them to persist. Some encouragement that students received from different people were intentional, but others were unintentional forms of encouragement. There were variety of people who encouraged participants to enroll in and graduate from college. Some of the people mentored the participants and expressed care about their futures, which included graduating from college.

Some participants discussed receiving encouragement from a variety of people to attend and graduate from college, which can be intentional or unintentional encouragement. Some personal experiences that students received that was unintentional encouragement from people was shown by some participant's statements. One participant stated, "when I would go back home and go to church, many of the people at church would tell me that I was on the right track and that I made them proud and couldn't wait until I graduate." Another participant stated, "sometimes when I call my mom, and while we are talking, she would start saying that she tells people how good I'm doing at school." One participant said "when I go home and happen to see

my old teachers, they love to give me a hug and tell me how happy they are that I'm doing good and they always knew I had it in me to go to college. They say they know I'm going to graduate because I was a good student in high school." One student stated, "I met some alumni from my college at an event and they gave me a lot of advice about finishing school and explained the benefits of having a degree. They used their own experiences as examples and told me that I could do it too. They said that I could contact them if I needed anything."

Some students also received intentional encouragement from people. One participant said "my stepdad always calls me to check on me and how school is going. He always helps me to keep a positive attitude about my classes and wants to know how things are going. He doesn't want me to worry and checks to see if I need anything." Another participant stated, "my grandmother calls to check on me and sometimes she will send me something to think about home. She reminds me that's anything that's hard is worth doing and that I'm not alone. Further, a participant stated "my stepbrother drives to my school sometimes so I can be around family and brings me money and something from home. He checks on my progress and tells me to stay strong and remember that he is in my corner." Another student stated, "my aunt would help me keep a positive attitude when I would get frustrated with my classes. She always helped me feel better. I would always call her to get advice and talk to her when I would get homesick. She knew how it felt because she went to college and has her degree."

Some participants discussed how the conversations their family members had with them about their futures motivated them to enroll in and graduate from college. One participant stated "my grandmother was a teacher and she would always would talk to me about finishing college so I could have the best opportunities. I knew she was right. She always would talk to me about it." Another participant said, "my aunt and uncle graduated from college and would give me

advice about different colleges and talk to me about scholarships, completing applications, looking at different schools, and taking the SAT more than one time, and all the other things I would need to do to get into college, and to get in a good school. They never let me forget that I was going to go college after high school.” Another participant stated, “my mom would sit me and brother down and talk to me about what I would do after high school. She would tell me the reasons why I should keep going to school after I finished high school so I could get a better job than she has now. She wanted me to have better chances than she did” Another participant said, “my mother didn’t go to college and would talk to me about having a good job so I wouldn’t have to depend on anybody. She would tell me about how hard it has been for my cousins because they dropped out of college.” One participant stated “my aunt and uncle would talk to me about my long-term goals and they would help me figure out what I would do after high school. They would tell me why I should go to college and that a high school diploma wasn’t enough education to accomplish my goals and dreams.”

Some people spent extra time with students and mentored them before and after they enrolled in college, which led to their enrollment and persistence in college. One student discussed, “one of my teachers would spend extra time with me at school and help me look at colleges and complete applications.” Another student stated “my mentors from my TRIO program would teach me about how to be successful in college.” A participant also discussed, “my coach would take time to talk to me about going to college and earning a football scholarship at a school that would help me get a good education.” Some students also talked about how relationships with their teachers and counselors in their high school were important for them to enroll in college. One participant stated “one of my teachers at school would help me find colleges on the internet and fill out applications to the colleges they were close by to my

home town. She would help me when she had extra time at school and sometimes she would stay after school to give me help with the parts I didn't how to fill out. She would help me find scholarships and ways I could pay for school. She would show me the parts that my mom would need to fill out and the information about my mom's finances that I needed to send with the forms. I couldn't have made it without her." Another participant stated, "I decided to major in business administration in college because my high school counselor advised me to take a couple of business electives when I was still in high school. They were interesting and made me want to work for a company, but really made me want to own a business after I graduate from college. They made my last year of high school more fun and made me excited to go to college after I graduated."

Some students talked about how their mentors have helped them persist toward graduation. One student stated "the head of the diversity and inclusion office in my college has helped guide me through my major. She is a resource that I go to any time I need help or have a problem that I don't know how to handle. She gives me advice and encourages me to stay positive and know that I'm doing good and achieving." Another student said "I have friends who are alumni at my school and they spend lots of time with me. They keep my spirits up when I get frustrated with school and helps me to stay focused and calm. They remind me that I should pace myself and not try to rush things. They know I can get overwhelmed pretty fast."

Participants also discussed how different people expressed their care for them while they have been in college. One participant stated "my friends and I check on each other and make sure that we are all okay. Sometimes we all just get together and talk about any problems that we have." Another participant said, "my professor in one of my classes would talk to me about my stress and helped me learn how to self-motivate myself and build my self-esteem while taking

his class.” Another participant stated “the people in the diversity and inclusion office talk to me about any problems I have and have told me that I can always come to them for help. They have been my life-savers and I know that I can count on them to help me with any problem that may come up. I know that I can trust them and they have my back.”

Theme # 3: Motivation as a Vehicle to Enrollment and Persistence in College

Some students also have talked about factors that motivated them to enroll in college, and have motivated them to persist to graduation. One student stated “some of the negative things that I see in my neighborhood made me want to leave home and get to a college far away from home. I just knew that I needed to be distant from home so I could have a different environment.” Another participant stated, “Sometimes I got distracted in high school by people I felt like I outgrew. They kept making the same childish mistakes, like partying and making bad decisions. It made me want to go college somewhere they weren’t going to. I knew they would be a big distraction in college and I didn’t want to be around them. Most of them went to a HBCU that I had a scholarship to go to, but I knew they would be there, so I chose to go somewhere I knew they weren’t going to be. I know the tuition costs more at my college, but it was worth it to me.” Some students were motivated to persist and graduate from college so they could help their families with finances. One student stated, “I need to give back to my family because they sacrificed too much to give me the opportunity to be where I am now, they don’t have anyone else to take care of them, so I have to be there for them, I just need to finish and get a good job.” Another student said “my mom is all that I have and she has always had to work too much to take care of me and my little brothers, she doesn’t make a whole lot right now.”

Some participants described how their families’ financial hardships motivated them to enroll in college, and graduate with a degree. One student, who lived with his grandparents,

stated “my grandparents didn’t graduate from college and they struggled to take care of me because they didn’t have jobs that paid much money. I wanted to attend college because I didn’t want to have to go through the same struggles that they had to go through. I want to be able to have enough money so I can enjoy my life and not have to worry so much about paying bills.” Another student said, “I want to graduate with my degree and get a good job so I can take care of my family back at home. My mom doesn’t make a lot of money and it’s hard for her to take care of my little sister. She did a lot for me and I just want to be able to take care of my momma and my sister.” Another participant stated “my cousins dropped out of college and they are always looking for a job that makes more money. I don’t want to have to do the same thing. I don’t want to have to work somewhere that just pays a little bit of money.” Some students discussed that their families’ expectations for their futures encouraged them to attend college and complete their post-secondary degrees. Some participants also discussed how advice from their families about going to college influenced them to attend college and graduate with a Bachelor’s degree.

Single Parent Family Students

There were different discussions by the participants who came from single parent families, as compared to those who came from nuclear families that are related to Research Question 1: How did black American male college students describe their personal experiences that led them to enroll and persist in pursuing a college education? They included the encouragement they received from different factors that led their decisions to enroll in college, including people other than their parents, their participation in organizations, pre-enrollment programs, and electives classes, which came from different factors. Additionally, there were factors that motivated them to stay in college and persist to graduate.

SP Theme # 1: Encouragement From a Village of People

The participants consistently discussed the encouragement that they received from people other than their parents, including their teachers, mentors, and members of their church. One participant stated, that his older brother would give him advice and tell me that going to college would be best for me instead of getting a job that wouldn't pay much money and to go somewhere that would give me the best opportunity to have a career and be independent.” Encouragement also came from people outside of their families. Another participant stated, “My teacher would help me with my homework and filling out college applications and financial aid forms after school. She graduated from college and knew how to help me more than my mom could because she didn't go to college.” Another participant said, my coach would teach me discipline and lessons that would get me ready for life after I graduated. He would always preach to me and teammates about going to college instead of staying around and getting in trouble.” Another participant said, “I would go to church with my mother and some of the people at church would encourage me to keep getting an education after I graduated from high school.”

SP Theme # 2: Participation and Enrollment in College

The participants also talked about how their participation in organizations, pre-enrollment programs, and electives classes in their high school that encouraged them to decide to enroll in college. One participant stated, “the trio program at my school gave me a chance to see a college and showed me that it would be better than getting a low paying job and staying in my neighborhood the rest of my life. I want to make more money and have a real career.” Another participant said, “I was in the Charles W. Donaldson Scholars Academy and it inspired me to go to college. They had classes and helped me to get my SAT scores up. I probably would not have

gotten in my college if it wasn't for them. My mom was excited that they could help me get accepted to my college. I owe them." One participant said, "the accounting classes that I took in high school gave me the idea to major in business management when I got to college. I want to start my own business one day and it gave me inspiration and the knowledge I needed to choose a career path."

SP Theme # 3: Motivation From Circumstances

The participants also discussed circumstances that motivated them persist to graduate. The participants discussed their responsibility to be an example for their siblings, peers, and community, which motivated them to stay in college. One participant stated, "I want help others get where I am and see me as an example of what they can do." Another participant said, "my little brothers need to see what I did so they can follow me and go to college too." Another participant said, "my little sister is young, and she needs to know that her big brother was the first graduate in our family. That will motivate her to go to college and know it's the best thing to do in her life. I don't want her life to be hard like it may be for some of the kids she is growing up with."

Additionally, the participants discussed the need to graduate with a degree, which motivated them to persist to graduate. One participant said, "My mom doesn't make much money and needs help to take care of my little brothers. I use to help her since I'm the oldest, but now I'm not at home anymore. I need to finish and make some money so I can help them when I get back home." Another participant stated, "I don't want to go back home without finishing college because it would seem like I quit or didn't succeed and achieve my goals. I want to have a career instead of job. I want my mom and little sister to be proud of me and know that I didn't give up." Another participated said, "my mom and stepdad have done too much to

help me so not having a degree is not an option. They sacrificed to get me in this position and I don't want to feel like I failed because I know that's not what my future is too important."

SP Theme # 4: Participation and Persistence to Graduate

The participants also discussed how their participation in organizations and programs in college helped them persist to graduate. One participant said, "my fraternity brothers give me motivation to keep going and not stop because I get frustrated sometimes with school. It would be easy to just quit but college is hard for many of us, so we keep each other focused and motivated. We hold each other up." Another participant stated, "the black accounting organization in my college has taught me about different careers that I can pursue after I graduate. I enjoy it and it's something that keeps me thinking about the future." Another participant said, "the ASAP scholarship at the diversity center on campus and the Emerging Scholars program has given me resources that I can use to help me graduate. I liked the program because it helped me get adjusted to college and showed my mom that I would be okay because I would have people who can support me if school got too tough."

The answer to the research question, therefore, is that involvement and interactions of the participants, combined with personal motivation, led students to enroll and persist in college. The three themes identified in the interviews all focused on the personal aspects of the student's lives, suggesting the importance of social and cultural capital in the decision-making process. Further, involvement in academic activities, including pre-college programs and activities in high school led students to enroll in college and gave them the academic abilities to be successful. The relationships these students had with several offices, departments, and organizations on their campuses were identified as critical factors that influenced their decision to persist and graduate from college.

Participants' personal experiences with a variety of people made a difference in the decisions to attend college and persist to graduate with a bachelor's degree. Intentional and unintentional encouragement that they received from a variety of people also influenced their decision to enroll in college after high school, as well as keep them in college until they completed their degree. Additionally, the extra time and mentorship, as well as caring, that they received from people influenced their decisions to enroll in college and persist to graduate. Finally, they received motivation from different sources that influenced them to enroll in college, and it kept them focused to complete their academic programs.

Research Question 2: How did Black American men enrolled in college describe the role and perceived power of parental influence in the decision to enroll in higher education?

Participants responded to several questions in the interview protocol that were constructed to explore the second research question. Two questions were placed in the first section of the interview protocol, which asked about participants' personal backgrounds. The first question asked participants to describe their decision to go to college and discuss the influences that led them to decide to go to college. A prompt was included under the first question that gave me the opportunity to note influences that might have related to influences from their parents and home life. The second question, asked participants to discuss, as they were growing up, the roles that their families in their home played (or not played) in their thinking about going to college after high school. Prompts to this question considered several elements, including the strength of their families' influence, one person that encouraged them to think about going to college after high school, open conversations they had about college with their families, the kinds of conversations they had with their families about the future, and if they ever argued with their families about the thought of going to college. The next three questions in the

interview protocol were not constructed to ask participants to discuss their personal background and experiences with enrollment in college, but some participants briefly discussed information that was related to their families' influences on their decisions to enroll in college. Three themes emerged from participants' responses to interview questions, including:

Theme #1: Parents as Resources for Their Children's Enrollment in College

One influence that led some participants to enroll in college were parents who were knowledgeable about college enrollment and the kinds of resources that would help with their college acceptance. Additionally, some students discussed how enrolling in college was difficult because their parents were unfamiliar with the process of college enrollment. Participants gave multiple examples of their experiences with enrolling in college, and they discussed how their parents' influenced their decisions that led them to enroll in college.

Some parents were knowledgeable of or had previous experiences with enrollment in four-year colleges, and served as resources for their children. One participant stated "my parents could help me with applications because my dad recently completed a graduate degree and my mom has a nursing degree." Another participant stated "my mom has a medical degree and my dad has a graduate degree, and they have had to go to college multiple times and at different schools." Further, three participants discussed how their moms were able to help because they had earned bachelor's and master's degrees and helped them complete financial aid documents and college applications. One participant discussed how his mom made him attend AP courses so he could enroll early in college. Another participant stated "my mom had done everything before," meaning that she had earned a degree from the college he enrolled in which made it easier for him to learn what he needed to do to go to school there. Additionally, some

participants discussed that going to college was a challenge because their parents were not knowledgeable about the process, resources, or paperwork needed to enroll them in college.

Some students found it difficult to enroll in college because their parents were unfamiliar with the resources and applications that were needed to enroll in college. One participant said “my mom didn’t know how to help me get in,” and another said “I had to find someone who could help me with what I needed to enroll.” Some participants’ parents were challenged with helping their children complete financial aid forms and did not have close relationships with officials at their children’s high schools who could give them advice. Further, students discussed how they felt lost in the enrollment process but were determined to get extra help. Several students also stated, “I did not know if I would have enough money” to go to college because financial aid did not seem to cover all the expenses they would need to attend, particularly to pay for extra expenses that they might have. Additionally, several participants discussed that they only learned about college from other sources, rather than by their parents, which gave them and their parents a sense of security by knowing they had people they could turn to for help.

Theme #2: Students’ Perceptions of Support From Their Parents

Parents who supported the idea of their children going to college helped influence their children’s decisions that led them to enroll. Some participants discussed how their parents gave them various forms of support, even while growing up, that led them to enroll in college, including financial, emotional, academic support. In contrast, some students explained how their parents were unable to give them the support they needed to enroll in college, particularly because they did not understand how to help them.

Several participants discussed how their parents knew how to help supplement or reduce the costs of attending college when financial aid was not sufficient to pay for the full costs that

would be needed to stay in college. One student stated “my mom was able to get me tuition discounts from her job,” which helped him lower the expenses of his enrollment. Another student said “my parents helped me find scholarships” that would help pay for his tuition, which would keep him out of debt after he graduated from school. One participant discussed how his parents drove him to and from school, which was in a different state, so he could spend time with his family between semesters and during holiday breaks, which he felt was a form of emotional support.

Multiple participants discussed how their parents gave them emotional support, which helped them feel comfort in knowing that their parents would be a positive support structure for them during their attendance in college. Several participants discussed how their parents motivated them to keep a positive attitude about their future, including their opportunities to earn accepted in college. One student stated that he was afraid that his “GPA and test scores were not good enough” to earn acceptance in college, but that his mother encouraged him to think positive and believe in himself. Several students felt a sense of insecurity about getting into college, but their parents motivated and encouraged them to stay positive and focus on doing their best. For instance, one student described how his mom always “had his back” and told him that “nothing can hold you back but yourself,” which he stated “would give me energy to keep going and not quit.” Another student discussed how his dad would tell him to keep his “mind on the future,” and that “we can support each other and hold each other accountable,” which would be a form of co-support between them, as at that time, his father was attending a community college to earn an associate’s degree. Similar to the significance of emotional support on students’ decision to enroll in college, most of the participants described how their parents’ expectations were critical to their decision to enroll in college.

The same kind of support was demonstrated by parents for academic support and success. Two participants discussed how their mothers would help them with their schoolwork and attitudes towards education. One participant stated, “my mom made sure that my homework was done every day, and she would help me when I would get frustrated and didn’t know how to finish it. She would take the time and talk to my teachers about my attitude and progress in classes.” Another participant said, “my momma kept me disciplined with my schoolwork. She didn’t play around when it came to school and she knew when final grade reports would come out. She would ask me questions about my day at school and what I learned in each class, and then she would check behind me when I would complete my homework.”

Theme #3: Parents’ Expectations for Their Children’s Education and Future

Students described how their parents’ expectations for them to go to college was a critical factor that influenced their decision to enroll. Some participants explained that their parents would often communicate their expectations during conversations about going to college. One participant said “my mom would always tell me that I needed to go to school.” Another participant’s father did not graduate from college because he dropped out, and he expected him to have a better life with more professional opportunities. Several students discussed how their parents challenged them and expected them to be disciplined, which they felt were character traits needed to succeed in college. One participant stated “my mom was really strict about school-work and taught me right from wrong” while growing up and another student said “my mom taught me to be responsible,” which they felt gave them a constructive attitude toward their education. Some parents displayed their expectations early in their children’s lives. For instance, one participant stated “my mom exposed me early to college” by taking him, when he was a kid, to the classes she enrolled in while she attended college, and another said “my

mom invested in me.” Several students talked about how their parents expected them to do well in school and in their lives. One student said “everyone in my family is expected to go to college.” One participant also discussed how his parents’ expectations influenced him to want to give back to his family and “make them proud.” Further, one participant stated “my mom encouraged me” to go to school, and another student stated that his father, “encouraged me to go to college instead of the military like he did,” which he felt helped him realize the importance of pursuing a bachelor’s degree, and that he was proud that his dad was interested in his education and future, particularly because he could pursue educational opportunities that his dad not receive.

Single Parent Family Students

The role and perceived power of parental influence in the decision to enroll in higher education was different for the participants who came from single parent families than it was for those who came from nuclear families, including the encouragement they received from their parents, the parenting styles of their parents, and various circumstances that motivated them to enroll in college. Because of the differences in family structure, their parents gave more encouragement to their children and had firm parenting styles. The interview participants discussed how these factors influenced their decisions to enroll in college.

SP Theme # 1: Encouragement From Parents

Encouragement from their parents gave these participants a sense of emotional support, which encouraged them to enroll in college. One participant said “my mom would always challenge me and gave me the most encouragement. She would explain to me why college was so important for the future because a high school diploma was not enough anymore. She supported the idea of going to college.” Another participant said, my stepdad always took care of

me and was a father figure. He would tell me to do my best and not give up no matter how hard things would get.” Another student said, my mom was able to get a tuition reduction at her job so I could afford college and not be in debt after I graduate.”

SP Theme # 2: Parental Styles and Philosophy

The parenting styles of single parents were different from those in nuclear families. One participant said “my mom is really strict and she doesn’t play around about education. She would always make sure I finished my homework and taught me to be independent. She would check with my teachers when she had time off from work. She invested in me and made sure I would go to college” Another student stated, “my mom told me to be independent so I could take care of myself once I got to college. She always says I need to be more independent and make sure that I get the help I need from the people at my college.” Another participated said, “my stepdad and mom would argue with me and my brother about taking classes in a college program in the summer instead of wasting our time. We didn’t want to go and would argue with them about it, but we realized that they were right. They knew what was best for us.”

SP Theme # 3: Motivation to Enroll in College

There were various circumstances that motivated the participants to enroll in college. One participant said, “my dad dropped out and didn’t graduate from college. I want to have a degree and have better opportunities than he did because I have seen how hard it came be without a good paying job.” Another participant said, “my dad went to the military instead of going to college. He didn’t have a good paying job after he got out and I don’t want that to happen to me. The military seems to be a good career, but I want to have job security in the future.” One participant stated, “My mom didn’t go to college and she doesn’t make enough money to live comfortable. She is always working and trying to find a better job that pays more

money so she can help me and my little brothers. She doesn't want me to struggle like she does especially if I have children in the future.”

Therefore, the Black American men in the study described strong parental influence on their decisions to enroll in college. Students described that their decisions to enroll may not have been happened without their parents' influence, and they felt that their parents were enablers, particularly their mothers. Most of the participants in the study described how their experiences with going to college was less challenging because of the roles that their parents played in their lives, and in their goals to further their education. Students also described how their decisions to enroll in college may not have happened without their parents.

Research Question 3: What were the levels of tolerance for disagreement among Black American men enrolled in college?

To answer this question, each interview participant was asked to complete the McCroskey Tolerance for Disagreement scale instrument. As described in Chapter 3, this 15-item survey asked respondents to rate their agreement with different items about how they communicate disagreement. The scaling range for the instrument was 15-75, with a mid-point of 45. Any score above 45, that is a 46 or higher, would be considered a high tolerance for disagreeing with another person.

The individuals interviewed for the study who indicated that they came from a two-parent family had an average tolerance for disagreement score of 49, with a range of 39-58. As shown in Table 1, two of these five had low-levels of tolerance for disagreement with scores below the midpoint of 42 and 39. For the three individuals who reported coming into higher education from a single parent family, they had an average tolerance for disagreement score of 61, with a range of 58-65.

Table 1.
Results of Tolerance for Disagreement Scale

Single Parent Family	No	Yes
	58	61
	57	58
	53	65
	42	
	39	
AVERAGE	49.8	61.3

The differences in the averaged scores reported have shown that different levels of TFD were based on the type of family structure and the expectations and interactions that they had with their families about their enrollment in college. The higher TFD scored by the interview participants who came single parent families suggested that they were less likely to oppose the expectations their family had, and to challenge their family during the interactions they had about their decision to enroll in college. The interview participants who came from two-parent families scored a lower TFD and were more likely to contest their family’s expectations, and challenge them during the interactions they had with their family about the their decision to enroll in college. The findings have shown that the differences in the levels of TFD between the individuals who come from single parent families and those who come from two-parent families can impact their decision to enroll in higher education.

Research Question 4: To what extent were the primary elements of community expectancy theory identified as critical by Black American men enrolled in college?

The themes that were found during the analysis of the study were related to the five constructs of community expectancy. The interview participants discussed their interactions

with social capital and cultural capital variables that exist in the constructs that they perceived were significant factors in their lives. The interactions that the interview participants had with the constructs and the expectations that were communicated to them as they grew through the different stages of development were shown to reinforce their college going behavior, and ultimately influenced their decision to enroll in college, which is a signature characteristic of community expectancy.

The interview participants' involvement in various activities was related to four constructs as the interactions with the constructs, and the expectations that were communicated by each construct influenced the participants' decisions to enroll in college. The Formal Education Bodies construct was found to influence the interview participants' decision to enroll in college, and included the pre-college enrollment activities and the events sponsored by colleges on- and off-campus, as well as the organizations that were associated with the colleges. The Civic Agencies construct is related to the activities that the interview participants volunteered in while serving their communities. The Religious Affiliations construct was associated with the events that the participants were involved in during church gatherings. Further, the Informal Associations construct was closely linked to each of the mentioned constructs as students and families may have formed loosely bonded relationships from their interactions with various people outside of their home environments.

The intentional and unintentional encouragement that interview participants received from people were related to two constructs. The Home Life construct was related to the telephone and in-person conversations that participants had with their families, which influenced them to enroll in college and persist to graduate once they became college students. The Formal Education Bodies construct was related to the people who influenced the participants' decision to

enroll in college, and were associated with the participants' high school and pre-enrollment programs, including their coaches, teachers, counselors, and mentors. Once the participants' enrolled in college, their friends and the professors and staff on their campuses influenced them to persist to graduate with a degree.

The motivation that the interview participants received from the circumstances and people were related to three constructs, including the Informal Associations, Formal Education Bodies, and Home Life constructs. One participant talked about the circumstances he had experienced in his high school and that he perceived his acquaintances at school to be negative influences, which motivated him to enroll in a college different than the one that those very schoolmates had planned to attend after graduation. Some of the interview participants were motivated to enroll in college because they wanted to help ease the financial hardships that impacted their families at home.

The participants discussed the perceptions that they had about their parents as resources for their enrollment in college, which were related to the Home Life, Formal Education Bodies, and Informal Associations constructs. Some of the parents were knowledgeable about the steps that should be completed to enroll in college, and were able to help their children complete those tasks at home. One parent also registered their child in classes that colleges would accept as early enrollment credits. In contrast, some participants parents in the home who were unfamiliar with the process to help enroll them in higher education, and therefore, they sought other people who could guide them through the process.

Some interview participants also discussed the perceptions they had about the support that they received from their parents about the idea of going to college. Several of the interview participants stated that they received various types of support from their parents, including

financial, emotional, and academic support. The Home Life construct played a significant role in how parents showed support to their children when they would visit home on holiday or semester breaks and while they were away at college.

The expectations that some parents had for the children's education and future was also evident in the Home Life construct, and the critical role it played in its relation to community expectancy. The parents of the interview participants reinforced their expectations and the intentions they had for their children's future, which included their enrollment in college. Some parents began the reinforcement of the expectations they had for their children to enroll in college through the interactions they had with them from an early age, and continued to emphasize them beyond their children's adolescence, which according to community expectancy, was a significant factor that influenced their decision to enroll in higher education.

Community expectancy was shown to influence the decision that led the interview participants to enroll in college. The interactions that individuals, including parents, have with their children and the expectations that are communicated to them, particularly when their children are at a young age, can have a profound influence on their children's identity development and the decisions that their children make as they grow older, especially during adolescence and beyond. As the findings of the study suggest, the more that children are surrounded by the social capital and cultural capital variables that encourage the environmental qualities that are beneficial to children's development, the more likely they will be receptive to the influences that exist in those environments, which shape their identities and decisions.

Research Question 5: What public policies, legislation, and institutional policies were perceived by Black American men to be the most influential in accessing higher education?

The collaboration among federal and state governments as well as higher education institutions have played an important role in the development of admissions and enrollment policies that help underrepresented students enroll in college. The findings from the current study support the idea that shared governance between the federal government and states can even further help design policies and programs that will enhance the enrollment of Black American men. In specific, there are four policy areas that participants discussed as important elements that impacted their decisions to enroll and persist in college: pre-college enrollment, personal decisions, mentors, and relationships.

Pre-College Enrollment

The interview participants discussed the importance of pre-college enrollment programs and how they impacted their decision to enroll in college. Most of the participants struggled with different areas necessary for their attendance in college because of their level of knowledge, including the steps that they needed to complete to enroll in college, nor did they understand the support needed to help prepare them for college. There are several examples of pre-enrollment support that the participants gave during their interviews.

Participants believed that they needed opportunities to register for courses at lower costs that would prepare them for college admission exams, including the ACT and SAT. Tours of colleges also would have given them a sense of living on a college campus, an understanding of the academic and social support networks and offices that might be available on campus, as well as the different activities and organizations they could participate in once they enrolled in college. Some of the participants and their parents did not know about the different funding opportunities that would help support them, which they believed was important for them to afford tuition, housing, living expenses, and other expenses. Additionally, participants did not

know which academic major to choose and how to choose one because they reported not knowing about the careers that each major could offer them, and how to match their interests with a major. Some participants also expressed how relationships and collaboration among colleges, their families, as well as their high schools and communities would provide them with the support they needed to make informed decisions about enrollment in college.

Policy Framework Response: There are a number of institutional, state, and federal practices currently at work in public education that frame a philosophical approach to higher education. Federal programs such as GEAR-UP, TRIO, and Upward Bound provide college exposure and an introduction to a select-few high school students. State level programs similarly provide some support for the preparation of individuals to attend college. An example is the CPEP program in Arkansas that provides ACT test support and test financing for certain students. Institutional responses are also available to certain students, including summer “bridge” programs that allow at-risk or first-generation students to come to campus early to have an introductory period of time on campus. Together, programs such as all of these reflect a set of practices and philosophies, broadly, that agencies recognize their importance and that public funds can and should be committed to helping potential students. Participants in the current study, however, provided comments, thoughts, and observations that although these programs might exist, they are somewhat lacking and more could be done to accomplish their goals. Participants were not consistently capable of identifying the resources that they needed to get into college, suggesting that the overarching philosophy of college access should be transformed into policy that better articulates practices across agencies and ultimately, is available to a broader number of students in a more interactive manner.

Personal Decisions

Some of the interview participants expressed their need for support with making personal decisions related to various aspects of their lives during their attendance in college. Some of the participants discussed the importance of choosing a major once they enrolled in college and the difficulties they had with this decision as they enrolled beyond their first year. Each participant also commented on the need for additional mental health services and help with personal decisions about self-management as they struggled with these areas which were critical to help them persist to graduate. This also raised an interesting perspective on the Black American men and their willingness to access and use on-campus mental health services.

Participants had difficulties with declaring a major once they enrolled in college because they did not know about the career options that would be available to them after they graduated, and if those careers would fit their interests and goals. Additionally, the participants struggled to persist to graduation because of the mental health symptoms that they experienced during their time in college. As a group, they struggled to find the appropriate help that they needed to overcome the stress, anxiety, and depression they experienced in college as well as possible pre-existing mental health issues that only manifest themselves once they enrolled. Participants also struggled with finding help with self-management, including how to study, time management, work-life balance, work-ethic, and setting professional and personal goals.

Policy Framework Response: There are a number of colleges that provide career services to students, however most of the interview participants struggled to decide on an academic major that fit their interests and goals. Additionally, a number of states administer and support public behavioral health services to providers throughout the state who offer mental health treatment and substance abuse prevention and treatment services to their residents. There are a number of

behavioral health services on college campuses that offer students mental health and substance abuse services, but most of the interview participants struggled to identify the appropriate kinds of services that they might need. Participants also struggled to find formal services on their campuses that helped them learn many of the self-management skills that they needed, and usually sought out informal resources. Policy that makes mental health services easier to access in the community might benefit students like those in this study who might require support but are unable, or unwilling, to access it. Institutional policies that generate stronger feelings of community might also be appropriate for students like those in the current study. Any policy framework that does emerge, however, must be of a scale that can reach a broader number of participants than current practices.

Mentors

All of the interview participants commented on the importance of mentors in their lives and how they helped them graduate from high school and decide to enroll in college. Mentors were able to give them support, including encouragement, motivation, and direction that were critical as they faced challenges that could have reduced their chances to attend college. Additionally, the participants sought help from mentors on college campuses where they attended and in the surrounding communities that their colleges were located, providing them a caring resource to help them with their education and integration to campus and the community.

One participant discussed how his athletic coach taught him discipline and to be responsible for his decisions and actions and showed him that he could overcome difficult situations. Another participant talked about his teacher, and how she would spend extra time to help him with to complete his homework, college applications, and financial aid forms. Some participants discussed mentors who led the academic and social organizations in their high

schools, and gave them direction and showed them the benefits of college. Once they enrolled in college, three participants talked about mentors who gave them advice and direction as they participated in their university's new student programs.

Policy Framework Response: There are a number of colleges that sponsor programs that provide students with mentors in organizations or programs related to academics, as well as diversity and inclusion initiatives. The Call Me MISTER program at Clemson University is one such programs and was established to increase the number of available teachers from diverse backgrounds, particularly among South Carolina's lowest performing elementary schools. The program for Black American men provides admitted students with tuition assistance through loan forgiveness programs, an academic support system, a cohort system, and assistance with employment at schools.

Private associations and non-profits also deliver programs aimed at creating mentoring relationships, such as the Southern Educational Research Board (SREB) minority scholars program and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) NASPA Undergraduate Fellows Program (NUFP). The NUFP program provides support, exposure, and mentoring to underrepresented populations with a career interest working in student affairs.

There are few formal, publicly supported mentoring programs, especially targeted for underrepresented populations. The majority of programs that do exist, however, are often framed around specific content, such as for emerging business or community leaders. There are elements in both state and federal programs that could be extended to college campuses, such as extending the support in GEAR-UP or Trio programs from not just pre-college enrollment, but through the college experience. Similarly, mechanisms such as the McNair Scholars program could be expanded to provide in-college support.

Relationships

There are a number of relationships that the interview participants developed with people who were positive influences in their lives, particularly as they pursued a high school diploma, enrollment in college, and a college degree. Some of these social capital variables are critical to the individual development of students along their life course, particularly those who are closest to students.

The parents of most of the interview participants were their main source for encouragement and motivation. Their parents expected them to attend college, even though some of them did not know how to help, but wanted them to have better opportunities for success than they had at their age, including employment opportunities and social mobility. The expectations of single parents were especially high because of the sacrifices they made to give their children a better future. People, including coaches, teachers, and mentors, also were important role models for interview participants who gave them support, particularly when the participants' families were not able to help their children complete tasks that were necessary to enroll in college. Informal relationships with people, including friends and the parents of friends, gave students another source of social capital that helped them to succeed. Additionally, the participants discussed how their relationships with mentors and friends helped them in college. Some participants developed partnerships with their fraternity brothers which gave them a group to socialize with, and receive encouragement, motivation, and pride.

Policy Framework Response: There are a number of states that teach students about socialization skills, but may not provide students with programs that help students develop relationships with people who can help them enroll in college and persist to graduate. Additionally, a number of colleges provide students with opportunities to join organizations and

participate in programs, however, there are a small number of programs, including Call Me Mister, that provide students with the networks that they need to help them persist to graduate. Social capital is a theoretical framework that involves variables that are within an individual's network, including parents, coaches, friends, neighbors, mentors, and other people who an individual develops a relationship. These variables can help or hinder an individual by the expectations they communicate to them, and ultimately influence their decisions including their decision to enroll in college. Social capital variables also can influence an individual's behavioral and emotional well-being, both which are important for students to persist in college.

State-level policy makers, including those in departments of education and human services, as well as economic or workforce development, might find strengthening the education related to emotional intelligence in the public education curriculum and in other education-related programs to be helpful. Part of this approach might include expanding socialization skills among children, and adults, when they are providing parental continuing education through extension centers to help teach them effective parenting strategies that result in children with a better socialization skill set. Other offices, such as the recent development of human services hubs in cities like Dallas, Texas, might be useful dissemination mechanisms for continuing and social education programs.

D. Chapter Summary

The chapter provided a summary of the study that focused on the semi-structured interviews of six Black American men who were enrolled in college. These interviews provided the data appropriate to answer the study's research questions. Overall, the participants identified elements of community expectancy as being important to their decision to enroll in college, and

many of these same elements were present in their descriptions of the reasons and processes that enabled them to be successful in college.

Chapter V. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Discussion

The chapter includes the summary of the study, which focuses on the five research questions the study sought to answer. There are six conclusions that were made about the study. There are six recommendations for practice for various individuals, education institutions, and organizations that focus on higher education, six recommendations for further research, and a discussion that includes past literature that focuses on the education of black American men.

A. Summary of the Study

The summary of the study discusses the research questions the study sought to answer. The results of the research questions came from the responses of interview participants. The environmental factors that impacted their decisions to enroll in college and persist to graduate are discussed in the chapter.

Research Question 1: How did Black American male college students describe their personal experiences that led them to enroll and persist in pursuing a college education?

The interviews resulted in responses that were classified into three themes: Involvement Related to Academics and Community, People Make a Difference, and Motivation as a Vehicle to Enrollment and Persistence in College.

Research Question 2: How did Black American men enrolled in college describe the role and perceived power of parental influence in the decision to enroll in higher education?

The interviews resulted in responses that were classified into three themes: Parents as Resources for Their Children's Enrollment in College, Students' Perceptions of Support From Their Parents, and Parents' Expectations for Their Children's Education and Future.

Research Question 3: What were the levels of tolerance for disagreement among Black American men enrolled in college?

The results from the TFD measurement survey showed higher levels of TFD for interview participants who came from single parent families. In contrast, a lower TFD resulted for interview participants who came from nuclear families.

Research Question 4: To what extent were the primary elements of community expectancy theory identified as critical by Black American men enrolled in college?

The findings of the study suggested that community expectancy theory impacted the interview participants' decisions to enroll in college and persist to graduate. The elements of community expectancy, including parents, who function in the Home Life element, were significantly influenced the lived experiences of interview participants and their decisions to enroll in college.

Research Question 5: What public policies, legislation, and institutional policies were perceived by Black American men to be the most influential in accessing higher education?

The interviews resulted in responses classified into four themes: Pre-college Enrollment, Personal Experiences, Mentors, and Relationships.

B. Conclusions

1. Community expectancy and TFD were shown to impact the development for participants in the study and their decisions to enroll in four-year non-minority serving colleges, and their persistence to graduate.
2. Social capital variables, particularly parents and family, were critical to the development of the interview participants' decision to enroll in college and persist to graduate.
3. The higher TFD score by the interview participants who came from single parent

families suggested that they were less likely to oppose the expectations their family had, and to challenge their family during the interactions they had about their decision to enroll in college.

4. The interactions that individuals, including parents, have with their children and the expectations that are communicated to them, particularly when their children are at a young age, can have a profound influence on their children's identity development and the decisions that their children make as they grow older, especially during adolescence and beyond.
5. The more children are surrounded by the social capital and cultural capital variables that encourage the environmental qualities that are beneficial to children's development, the more likely they will be receptive to the influences that exist in those environments, which shape their identities and decisions.
6. There are policy implications that relate to more than educational policy, but the family and social structures that can impact children in their environments. College access initiatives need to consider the different roles of those who aid in decision-making. Additionally, college retention issues in higher education can relate to the impact of environmental factors that surround Black American men prior to enrollment in higher education.

C. Recommendations

Recommendations for Practice

1. State and federal policymakers, as well as higher education institutions, should design

- and evaluate programs that focus on environmental factors, particularly family and parents, that impact the development of Black American men and their decisions to enroll in college, as well as their persistence in college.
2. Institutional, state, and federal college access initiatives should be extended to provide students and their families with programs that focus on the interactions and expectations that impact the development of students and encourage them to enroll in college.
 3. Programs for parents that teaches them parenting and the impact of the interactions they have with their children, as well as the expectations that they communicate to encourage their children's decision to enroll in college and persist to graduate.
 4. Administrators and faculty members in higher education should be trained to understand how environmental factors that can impact students prior to enrollment in college and that can impact their persistence to graduate.
 5. Counseling programs on college campuses should be tailored to support students who have been impacted by environmental factors prior to enrollment and as they attend college.
 6. Colleges, school districts, and communities should develop partnerships to support students and their families with programs and policies that encourage students to enroll in college and persist to graduate.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. The study can employ a quantitative research methodology to capture a representative sample of black American men, and subsequently build correlations and other quantitative research analyses can be conducted to compare the environmental factors

- that encourage black American men's decisions to enroll in college, and that encourage them to persist to graduate.
2. The study can include additional black American men who come from single parent families to compare the impact of family and social structures on their decisions to enroll in college and persistence to graduate to those who come from nuclear families.
 3. The study can employ additional qualitative research methodological approaches that examines the environmental factors that impact the experiences of black American men's decision to enroll in college and their persistence to graduate.
 4. The study can be extended to other genders, ethnic populations, and cultures to compare the environmental factors that encourage their decisions to enroll in college, and persistence to graduate.
 5. The study can extend to additional locations in the United States and different sizes of colleges to compare variables that encourage black American men's decisions to enroll in college and their persistence to graduate.
 6. The study can extend to a longitudinal study that examines black American males along their life-course and in different stages of development to capture the impact of environmental factors that encourage their decisions to enroll in college.

D. Discussion

Past literature has focused on the education of Black American men and their lack of participation in formal education, a confounding problem that leads to a higher number of social problems and fewer professional opportunities. Researchers in education policy have attempted to find solutions to this issue and have created strategies to increase the education attainment of Black American men for decades, however, many of them seldom focus on large scale solutions

that impact increases to enrollment in college and the origin of issues of non-enrollment. The current study explored this phenomenon, and therefore, contributes to literature base and the ongoing discussion about the lived experiences of Black American men who enroll in college and persist to graduate.

Academic and popular literature has focused on various topics about the college enrollment of Black American men, including college enrollment and graduation trends, pre-enrollment variables and programs, finance, college access policies, college choice, social and cultural capital variables, development and identity, and parental influences. Many of these writings and explorations, however, have focused on the impacts of these topics independently, and not on the impact as a whole. There are also college enrollment variables that were not discussed in the literature, but has been found to impact Black American men's decisions to enroll in college and persistence to graduate including environmental factors, community expectancy and Tolerance for Disagreement.

The literature also focused on topics that reported on the persistence of Black American men to graduate from college, including academic preparation, academic support, finance, parental support, community support, peer influence, college experiences, social and cultural capital, sibling influence, institutionalized structures, psychosocial factors, and psychological factors. The topics found in the literature were shown to influence Black American men's attendance in college and their persistence to graduate, however, other topics that have shown to impact the Black American men's decisions to enroll in college and persistence to graduate including, environmental factors, parental influence, community expectancy, and Tolerance for Disagreement.

There was one research article and one dissertation that focused on the role of community expectancy in attendance, however, Black American men's decisions to enroll in college and their persistence to graduate was not discussed in past literature. There was past literature that focused on the theories embedded in community expectancy, including Erickson's psychosocial development, Elder's life course theory, individual development, and Bourdieu's social and cultural capital, interactions and expectations with social capital variables, including parents, but mostly in isolation, and they were not integrated in one theoretical framework.

The Tolerance for Disagreement construct and measurement scale was not mentioned in past literature that focused on Black American men's decision to enroll in college and persistence to graduate. Additionally, some of the major components of the TFD construct were not found in past literature, including disagreement, tolerance, context of interpersonal communication (verbal and nonverbal), nature of conflict compared to disagreement, balance theory, degree of affinity, cognitive flexibility, and communication flexibility. However, the decision-making of students, their behavior, and their interactions with and expectations from social capital variables, including parents, were mentioned by some literature that focused on social capital and cultural capital and parental influence.

There were additional limitations to the study, including the location of the colleges, which were in one geographic region. Additionally, the sizes of the colleges and their systems were different and not compared, as they are in a quantitative study. Some of the interview participants were transfer students and some had enrolled in one college since they were freshman. Some of the participants also were in different classifications, including seniors, juniors, sophomores, and freshmen. Further, the participants were attending college and had not

graduated with a Bachelor's degree. Additionally, some of the participants came from nuclear families and some came from single parent families, and were not compared.

The exploration of the phenomenon in the study has shown that many black American men are in situations that have lasted since civil rights legislation was passed years ago. The impact of civil rights legislation, including affirmative action policies, have not been as successful for these men, as compared to other ethnicities, since they have been implemented by federal and state governments, and therefore, have generated a vicious cycle and impacted generations of their families, as well as threatened the sustainability of their communities. Because of the attainment gap that has existed among black American men, and the inconsistent percentage of them enrolled in college that can leave devastating, and long-term outcomes.

The interactions and expectations that children receive from their families is an important factor that can encourage their participation in higher education, and without it they may choose alternatives that can have lasting impacts on individual development, identities, and their future. The systematic structures that surround public policy has not only impacted the education of Black American men, but also their chances to provide for their families and their communities. Nuclear families are currently the minority of families in the United States, making single parent families a modern family structure, and leaving many parents to care for their households alone and children with less family capital, and a higher sense of belonging.

E. Chapter Summary

The chapter included the answers to the research questions in the summary of the study. There were six conclusions that referred to the frameworks and theories used in the study and their impact black American men's decisions to enroll in college and persist by the interview participants. Parental influence and policy implications relate to family and social structures that

impact children in their environments, as well as impact their development and decisions to enroll in college.

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Appendices

Appendix A

IRB Approval Confirmation



To: David Tolliver
From: Douglas James Adams, Chair
IRB Committee
Date: 10/21/2019
Action: **Expedited Approval**
Action Date: 10/21/2019
Protocol #: 1908210868
Study Title: The Development and Postsecondary Enrollment of Black American Men: The Perceived Influence of Environmental Factors
Expiration Date: 09/25/2020
Last Approval Date:

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Michael T Miller, Investigator

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

The Development and Postsecondary Enrollment of Black American Men: The Perceived Influence of Environmental Factors

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Principal Researcher: David V. Tolliver, III, Doctoral Student, Public Policy PhD Program
Faculty Advisor: Michael T. Miller, Professor, Higher Education, University of Arkansas

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in a research study about how Black American men decide to enroll in college. You are being asked to participate in this study because you hold identify as a Black American man and you are currently an undergraduate student in good academic standing at your institution.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

Principal Researcher

David V. Tolliver, III
Doctoral Candidate
Public Policy PhD Program
University of Arkansas
[REDACTED]
dt005@uark.edu

Faculty Advisor

Dr. Michael T. Miller
Professor, Higher Education
Graduate Education Building 153
College of Education and Health Professions
University of Arkansas
(479) 575-3582
mtmille@uark.edu

What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose for conducting the study will be to identify enabling factors that are perceived to encourage Black American men to enroll in postsecondary education. An important element in this research will be the role of the family, specifically single parent households. As the accessibility of this population is limited, the primary focus will be on the role of the family, with special attention given, when possible, to single-parent families.

Who will participate in this study?

Up to 25 Black American men who are currently enrolled as undergraduates and are in good academic standing will be interviewed for this study. Students will be identified through personal contacts at six different universities in the mid-south/mid-west near the four corners of Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma.

What am I being asked to do?

Your participation will require participating in a 30-45 minute interview, with field notes made of your responses to 6 scripted questions, with additional prompts. Additionally, our conversation will be audio-recorded to assure an accurate identification of your comments.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts identified with your participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

In addition to the ability to better help future Black American men enroll in college, there are no tangible benefits to participating in this study.

How long will the study last?

The interview field tests have suggested that the interview should take between 30 and 45 minutes of your time.

Will I receive compensation for my time and inconvenience if I choose to participate in this study?

You will not receive any compensation for your participation in this study.

Will I have to pay for anything?

There are no costs associated with your participation in this study.

What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?

If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. Also, you may refuse to participate at any time during the study. Your professional status will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law.

Participant information is collected on the first page of the interview guide. Following the interview, the first page will be removed from the field note section of the interview guide so that no attribution to individual participants will be possible. All field notes will be collected onto one master document. Following the collection of basic information from the first page, these pages will be shredded. All documents will be kept in a locked, secure faculty office at the University of Arkansas.

Will I know the results of the study?

At the conclusion of the study you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact the Principal Researcher or his advisor. You will receive a copy of this form for your files.

What do I do if I have questions about the research study?

You have the right to contact the Principal Researcher or his advisor as listed above for any concerns that you may have.

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
210 Administration
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
479-575-2208
irb@uark.edu

I have read the above statement and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with the participant. I understand that no rights have been waived by signing the consent form. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

Signature

Date

Appendix C

Tolerance for Disagreement Survey

The tolerance for disagreement scale is designed to measure the degree to which an individual can tolerate other people disagreeing with what the individual believes to be true. This survey was developed by Dr. James McCroskey and is used with the permission of his estate.

Should you have questions or concerns about this survey, please contact David V. Tolliver (dt005@uark.edu) or his Dissertation Director, Dr. Michael Miller (mtmille@uark.edu), University of Arkansas, [REDACTED] or (479) 575-3582.

Instructions: This questionnaire involves people's feelings and orientations. Hence, there are no right or wrong answers. We just want you to indicate your reaction to each item. All responses are to reflect the degree to which you believe the item applies to you. Please use the following system to indicate the degree to which you agree that the item describes you:

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree

1. It is more fun to be involved in a discussion where there is a lot of disagreement.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I enjoy talking to people with points of view different than mine.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I don't like to be in situations where people are in disagreement.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I prefer being in groups where everyone's beliefs are the same as mine.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Disagreements are generally helpful.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I prefer to change the topic of discussion when disagreement occurs.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I tend to create disagreements in conversations because it serves a useful purpose.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I enjoy arguing with other people about things on which we disagree.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I would prefer to work independently rather than to work with other people and have disagreements.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I would prefer joining a group where no disagreements occur.	5	4	3	2	1
11. I don't like to disagree with other people.	5	4	3	2	1

12. Given a choice, I would leave a conversation rather than continue a disagreement.	5	4	3	2	1
13. I avoid talking with people who I think will disagree with me.	5	4	3	2	1
14. I enjoy disagreeing with others.	5	4	3	2	1
15. Disagreement stimulates a conversation and causes me to communicate more.	5	4	3	2	1

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY!

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

**The Development and Postsecondary Enrollment of Black American Men:
The Perceived Influence of Environmental Factors
University of Arkansas**

Time of interview: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Single parent family: _____

Hometown: _____

Academic major: _____

Approximate overall GPA: _____

Year/semester in school: _____

THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY ABOUT YOUR DECISION TO ENROLL IN HIGHER EDUCATION. THIS STUDY REALLY FOCUSES ON YOU AND HOW YOU ULTIMATELY DECIDED TO ENROLL IN COLLEGE.

I AM PROVIDING YOU WITH AN INFORMED CONSENT FORM FORYOU TO REVIEW AND SIGN, IF YOU AGREE. AS NOTED, YOUR IDENTITY WILL BE HELD IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE AND YOUR IDENTITY WILL NOT BE LINKED DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY WITH THE STUDY FINDINGS.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS ENTIRELY VOLUNTARY AND YOU MAINTAIN THE RIGHT TO WITHDRAW AT ANY TIME.

BEFORE WE BEGIN, DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

DO I HAVE YOUR PERMISSION TO BEGIN?

Should you have questions or concerns about this survey, please contact David V. Tolliver (dt005@uark.edu) or his Dissertation Director, Dr. Michael Miller (mtmille@uark.edu), University of Arkansas, (479) 879-1028 or (479) 575-3582.

SECTION I: YOUR PERSONAL BACKGROUND

1. Describe for me your decision to go to college. What do you think ultimately led you to decide to go to college?

Other elements to consider:

-parent/home life

-extended family

-Formal education bodies

-Civic agencies

-Informal associations

-Religious affiliations

-Citizens/peers

2. When you think about your family in your home as you grew up, what role did they play or not play in your thinking about going to school after high school?

Other elements to consider:

-how strong was your family influence

-was there any one person who encouraged you

-did you have open conversations about going to college

-what kinds of conversations did you have about your future

-did you ever argue about the thought of going to college?

3. Once you got to college, tell me about some of the challenges you have had and what has kept you here?

Other elements to consider:

-offices that are designed to help you

-friendships/social organizations

-people at home/family

-community resources (church, etc.)

-faculty/mentors

4. What did you see as your biggest fears, obstacles, challenges, and opportunities for the coming year?

5. Would you do it all again?

Other elements to consider:

-do you have any regrets

-what would you do differently

-what would you tell someone

6. Is there anything else you want to add that we haven't covered?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY!