Exploring the Academic Identity Development of Black Male High School Students

Carrie E. Marcantonio

BS, Texas Christian University, 1998

MS, University of San Diego, 2003

Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Education of Baker University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Susan K. Rogers, PhD
Major Advisor

Matthew Bice, PhD

Keith Jones, EdD

Date Defended: May 7, 2024

Abstract

This qualitative study was conducted to explore the internal and external factors that influence the development of the academic identities of Black male high school students. The researcher focused on the experiences of 12 Black male high school students in a diverse semi-suburban school who were nominated to participate in the study by staff based on a set of criteria that identified them as high-achieving. The participants discussed their experiences as high-achieving Black male high school students during individual interviews with the researcher. The participants discussed factors that positively impacted their educational experiences, including personal aspirations, support from family and peers, and staff with high expectations. Two factors emerged as being the most influential to the success of the participants. Those factors were personal academic priorities and goal-setting and the encouraging role of school faculty and staff. Additionally, the participants shared that they value the example provided by faculty and staff of color, particularly high-achieving Black men who serve as role models. The role of peers of all kinds was also discussed by the participants, highlighting the variety and value of Black peers. Finally, participants discussed the importance of academic self-confidence and self-advocacy. Implications for action included the need to recruit and retain faculty and staff of color, creating opportunities for students to see themselves and their culture reflected in school leadership. The role that college-readiness programs play as tools to help remove barriers and open doors for students who are traditionally underrepresented on college campuses was also highlighted. Future research could explore similar factors in a suburban school, where the student population may be less diverse, or in an urban high school with a majority minority student population.

Dedication

To my children – Isabella, Jackson, Alouisa, and Turner Anselme: You are absolutely my "why"! I pray you never lose your curiosity and joyfully and relentlessly pursue your goals and dreams. You are kind, smart, others-centered, funny, and brave -- very much like the remarkable young men that I met through this research process. To those young men, my students, and my precious children: May you be limited only by your own imagination and determination. I believe in you. Thanks SO much for believing in me!

Acknowledgments

My persistence through this program would not have been possible without the support of my family. Thanks for putting up with the weekly Zoom class -- sometimes from the other room, sometimes from the back of the RV. Thanks for believing in me, picking up the slack when I was working, and listening to me process. Guess what? No more homework!

Thanks to the administration and leadership of the district where the study took place. They were welcoming and kind as they hosted me and helped facilitate this research. Dr. Keith Jones, principal, Dr. Dara Evans, AVID Coordinator, and Ms. Amber Washington, Black Student Union sponsor, were all instrumental in helping me find the right students to interview. Thank you for your help! I quite literally could not have done it without you. A HUGE thanks to the student leadership of BSU, the football and basketball teams, and AVID. You were great to work with, insightful, and mature. I cannot wait to see what is next for you!

Thank you to the building and district leadership mentors that I have worked with for encouraging and supporting me with resources and ideas, as well as listening to me talk about research. Thank you for facilitating my growth and pushing my thinking.

Thank you to the faculty of Baker University: Dr. Rogers for holding me accountable and keeping me on track from the very beginning, Dr. Waterman for helping me think things through, and Dr. Bice for pushing my thinking and challenging my assumptions. Dr. Jones, thank you for being absolutely instrumental in this process.

One of the best things about this experience for me are the beautiful and brilliant women that I had the opportunity to meet, learn with, and now call friends: the Drs Mom.

It took all of us encouraging, pushing, demanding, pestering, and believing in each other to make this happen for the four of us. Thanks for the Climb and Lift, my friends. A vital part of this sisterhood is my dear girlfriends and my mom, who fed the children, cleaned the house, held me accountable, and gave me grace. Thanks for the carpool, the front porch gifts, the pick-me-up memes, and co-parenting the Marc4! Of all the villages, I am blessed with the BEST.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

A high-quality education, equal access to educational programming, and the opportunity for social mobility for all were the intended outcomes of the Brown v Board of Education of Topeka U. S. Supreme Court decision in 1954 (Harper, 2008). However, as of 2024, American public schools have yet to make much progress since that decision, with significant access and equity discrepancies remaining between and within districts and states (Hochschild, 2003; Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017). In urban and suburban school districts, differences can be seen in building and facility quality (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017), teacher training, certification, and retention, and even the quality and variation of the courses and programs that are offered to students (Harper, 2008; Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017). While the separate but equal doctrine of the pre-Brown v Board era has been eradicated legally, social stratification in the United States creates a system of nested inequalities that persist and impact education quality, opportunity, and access (Hochschild, 2003; Schachner, 2021). Social stratification is evident when comparing school districts in the urban core to their suburban counterparts. Urban districts are less likely to be staffed with certified teachers in the subject area in which they teach and have a higher teacher turnover rate (Hochschild, 2003; Schachner, 2021). Highly specialized subjects, such as science, math, and special education, are more difficult to staff (Hochschild, 2003; Schachner, 2021). Urban schools are less likely to have adequate facilities, equipment for specialized courses, and the technology necessary for students to learn (Bell, 2006; Schachner, 2021). These schools experience high rates

of disciplinary issues, such as suspensions and expulsions, and have a higher dropout rate than the national average (Hochschild, 2003; Johnson, 2016).

Moving away from the city center, schools and districts in the suburbs and semi-suburbs reflect this stratification within buildings. In predominantly White schools in suburban and semi-suburban areas, Black male students remain among the most vulnerable populations (Gray et al., 2020). Statistically, they face more negative educational outcomes than their non-Black male peers. They are over-represented in special education and behavior programs and under-represented in gifted and Advanced Placement (AP) programs (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017). Black male students have a high dropout rate (McFarland et al., 2020), low graduation rate, low test scores, and low grade point averages (GPAs) (Gray et al., 2020) compared to their White, Asian, and Latinx counterparts. Additionally, Black male students often have what is perceived to be "low academic motivation, engagement, and interest" (Ford & Moore, 2013, p. 400).

The negative educational experiences of Black male high school students are frequently discussed in social science and educational research. According to Tyler et al. (2016), "Most descriptions of these experiences concentrate on Black male students' poor academic performance, school dropout rates, special education referrals, and school-based discipline troubles" (p. 6). Benchmark reading scores and college entrance exams, such as the ACT and SAT, are generally lower for Black males than their White, Latinx, and female counterparts (Schachner, 2021). The suspension and expulsion rate of Black male high school students is such that some researchers point to a nationwide push-out crisis for Black male youth (Tyler et al., 2016). The negative attention and persistent racism within educational structures may cause Black males to internalize negative

stereotypes, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement among these students (Johnson, 2016).

Background

Beginning with Coleman's (1966) report, *Equality of Educational Opportunity,* much educational research has been conducted on the academic achievement of marginalized students in America's public schools. In this report, Coleman and colleagues downplayed factors such as equitable school funding and systemic marginalization (Coleman, 1966). They asserted that measures outside school, such as family education level and household income, are stronger predictors of academic success than in-school factors. Kolluri and Tichavakunda (2022) wrote that the Coleman Report helped fuel an ideology that placed the ownness for academic achievement on marginalized students, "asserting that people were poor because of cultures that lacked industriousness" (p. 3). In 1990, Ogbu postulated that students who had different cultural and linguistic experiences at home struggled to learn inside the parameters of the cultural and linguistic expectations of the school. Much of the research centered around blaming marginalized students and families for their perceived lack of academic success rather than examining the process and policies that may unfairly keep students from reaching their potential. The reliance on this deficit-based approach to research is beginning to be replaced with asset-based question framing, allowing researchers to explore the positive attributes marginalized students bring to their educational experiences. Drawing on the theoretical foundation of critical race theory (CRT) and other frameworks, educational researchers are using an anti-deficit approach to identify and "elevate the strengths of

racially minoritized, working-class students and families to navigate oppressive systems" (Kolluri & Tichavakunda, 2022, p. 4).

Despite progress toward an asset-based approach when examining achievement among marginalized groups of students, much of the body of educational research around Black male academic success is still focused on underachievement. According to Deshay (2023), in 2021, "about 52% of Black men (compared to 61% of all men) 25 and older had been to college" (para. 6). This is an increase from 50% in 2018. While the percentage of Black men with a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 19% to 22% from 2018 to 2021, this progress pales when compared to a 34% bachelor's degree attainment of all men (Deshay, 2023). Data like this point to system-wide issues that have persisted for Black men in the education system despite efforts to close the achievement gap. Corbin-Thaddies (2022) discussed the concept of education debt, a term coined in 2006 by Ladson-Billings. This concept, looking at what the system owes to all students, helps move the educational discourse "from being about minority and disadvantaged students needing to catch up to more about holding adults accountable for paying down an incredible education debt we have accumulated as a nation" (Corbin-Thaddies, 2022, p. 12).

Midwest Public School District (MPSD)

Logan and Burdick-Will (2017) noted that inner suburban schools share characteristics with central city schools, while schools on the suburban periphery are more similar to rural schools, referring to those closest to the city as semi-suburban. MPSD is the largest semi-suburban school district in a large midwestern metropolitan area and shares the characteristics of many semi-suburban school districts. According to

the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MoDESE) (2022), MPSD has 20,255 students in K-12, with an additional 518 students in the early childhood pre-kindergarten program. Of these students, 53.5% are White, and 20.3% identify as Black or multi-racial. Of the district population, 32.4% of students qualified for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program in 2022, down from 47.1% for the 2020 school year (MoDESE, 2022).

Midwest International Baccalaureate High School (MIBHS)

The setting for this research was (MIBHS), one of four large, comprehensive high schools in the district. The school was established in 1929 in the suburbs of a large Midwestern city. As the oldest in the area, the school is rich with tradition, enjoys a solid academic reputation, and serves as a culture and resource center for the community. Sometimes referred to as a "big city school in a small town," MIBHS has been named the most diverse high school in the state (MPSD, 2022, para. 5). Enrollment at the time of the study was 1,645 students in Grades 9-12. The demographic makeup of the MIBHS has remained steady for the past 7 years. On average, about 36.4% of the student population identifies as White, 23.6% as Black, and 40% as other non-White racial and ethnic identities. Approximately 40% of MIBHS students are enrolled in the free or reduced-price lunch program, although the pandemic impacted that number. The average score for MIBHS students on the ACT is 19, compared to the state average of 21.5 and the national average of 20.7. MIBHS offers 15 AP courses, 26 Dual Credit courses, and 41 International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and is an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) school (MPSD, 2022). There are many opportunities for additional support for students, including AVID and Catalyst, an MPDS-created support

system. According to one of the MPSD AVID coordinators, the Catalyst program “is perfect for scholars who are underrepresented on college campuses, possess a strong academic profile, and seek challenging courses. Catalyst scholars must also embody the core pillars: intellectual curiosity, perseverance, adaptability, citizenship, and leadership” (AVID coordinator, personal communication, May 8, 2023). Both AVID and Catalyst are college readiness programs designed to support students who have the ability and desire to go to college but are traditionally underrepresented on college campuses. Some of the underrepresented categories of students supported by the AVID and Catalyst programs at MIBHS include first-generation college-goers, students living in poverty, and students of color. It is important to note that MIBHS espouses a “challenge by choice” philosophy, which means that all advanced courses are open to all interested students, without gatekeepers like test scores or reading levels getting in the way (AVID coordinator, personal communication, May 8, 2023).

Black male students at MIBHS score lower than their counterparts on standardized tests, have lower GPAs and have more discipline incidents than their non-Black male peers (MoDESE, 2022). However, some Black male high school students defy these stereotypes and thrive academically and socially (Harper, 2008). Although much is known about the deficit-based data surrounding failures and dropouts, little information has been gathered regarding Black male students’ social and academic capital, particularly those who break these stereotypes and thrive academically and socially (Corbin-Thaddies, 2022).

Theoretical Frameworks

Identity development among adolescents is complex and multifaceted. The more layers of intersectional identities a young person sees in themselves, the more complicated their identity development process becomes (Crenshaw, 1989). To better understand how intersectional identities, including social/group identity, racial identity, and academic identity, work together to create a person's sense of self, the research was examined through the lens of two theoretical frameworks: Albert Bandura's social identity theory and CRT.

Establishing theoretical frameworks to guide qualitative research is a valuable part of the process. Theoretical frameworks in social science disciplines often focus the research and create a starting point. According to Anfara and Mertz (2015), in qualitative research, there is a "close link between theory and method" because how a researcher studies the world determines what is learned about the world (p. 11).

Social Identity Theory. Bandura's social learning theory provides valuable insights into the formation and development of identity. According to Bandura (1977), identity is not an innate, fixed construct but rather a dynamic process influenced by various social factors. Bandura argued that individuals learn much of their knowledge and skills through observation and subsequent imitation of models within their social environment. These models can be real-life individuals, symbolic figures, or media portrayals. By observing and emulating others, individuals learn new behaviors and incorporate them into their repertoire of personality traits, thus contributing to their identity formation.

Bandura (1977) suggested that individuals tend to define themselves in terms of the groups to which they belong, including their cultural, ethnic, and social affiliations. Group membership provides individuals with a sense of belonging and identity and a framework for making sense of the world around them (Bandura, 1977). This theory offers valuable insights into the context of identity development among Black males. Acknowledging the intersecting identities of Black male high school students is vital, as they bring all those identities to school (Crenshaw, 1989). Bandura posited that all people observe and internalize behaviors and attitudes exhibited by models, whether positive or negative, in their environment. Group membership becomes particularly significant for Black males as they navigate their identities. The groups they belong to influence their perception of who they are. Groups provide a context for positively understanding their experiences; however, it is essential to acknowledge that group membership can also subject Black males to stereotypes and societal expectations. Negative media portrayals, such as the "thug," "player," or "bad boy" stereotypes, can shape their self-perceptions and influence their identity development (Johnson, 2016). In 2023, Elliott-Schrimmer noted that during a time of polarization in the media in the areas of education and race, her research reveals that educators make a difference and that they "must consider a student's racial identity when they teach" (p. 174).

Critical Race Theory. CRT was first posited in 1977 by Crenshaw, who asserts that all experiences are filtered through and experienced within the context of race. CRT is a framework that can be applied to various disciplines and is designed to examine the ways that race and racism are ingrained deeply into social structures and institutions in

the United States, including public schools. CRT opposes the concept of 'colorblindness' and is used to argue that racism is a deeply rooted part of American society.

Strayhorn (2019) emphasized the importance of cultivating a sense of shared identity among marginalized groups of students. Strayhorn discussed the role of educational practices and policies in shaping the identity development of Black male students. Using CRT as a framework allows educators to examine disciplinary practices that disproportionately impact students of color; lack of representation in textbooks, curriculum, and teaching staff; and biased assessment methods that may perpetuate systemic inequities (Strayhorn, 2019). Systemic barriers like these may inhibit the positive identity formation of young Black men by reinforcing negative stereotypes from media and peers. These barriers end up limiting the access that Black male students have to opportunities for academic growth and success. George (2023) found that students are missing a physical, social, and intellectual space to occupy as smart, high-achieving Black men. It is in these ways that systems may inadvertently "work to reproduce and maintain limitations on Black student achievement through an insistence on their unbelonging" (George, 2023, p. 20).

Identity Development – Social, Racial, and Academic

Identity is a complex concept when layers of intersectional identity work together to create a culminating idea of "authentic self" (Johnson, 2016, p. 12). In addition to goals that students have for themselves, expectations from family, peers, and educators inform student perceptions. For Black male students, many factors seem to be the most prevalent in their understanding of self, including social/group identity, racial identity, and academic identity.

Social or Group Identity Development. For Black male adolescents, social identity is entwined with masculinity and the importance of group membership and is complicated by systemic racism (Johnson, 2016). As members of a minority group, often of lower or working class, living and working inside a multicultural but predominantly White society, many Black male youths construct their sense of self and masculinity through a set of criteria unique to their experiences (Harris, 2018). Often rejecting the White masculine male norms (provider, protector, disciplinarian), Black males have been socialized in an "expressive style of masculinity that has been referred to as … exaggerated masculinity, reactionary masculinity… and bravado*"* (Harris, 2018, p. 351). Impression management, toughness, walking styles, greetings, and other behaviors characterize traditional Black masculinity. Harper (2006) discussed the negative impact that media, the within-race perpetuation of stereotypes, and systemic racism have on Black male social identity development. According to Harper (2006), "young African American men are groomed to devalue educational achievement" by both their families and their peers (p. 338). Harper asserted that those Black male students who aspire to educational excellence or leadership often do not receive support or validation from their same-race community or peers. In a 2023 study by Elliott-Schrimmer, students of color had positive feelings about the start of the year when teachers allowed them to start the year working with a smaller group of students, getting to know them better and sharing ideas in a collaborative environment. Elliott-Schummer (2023) noted that some Black students "experience isolation in AP classes, small group work allowed them to start to build connections with their classmates and build on the communal nature that Black and Brown students often desire" as part of their preferred learning styles (p. 144).

Racial Identity Development. According to Johnson (2016), racial identity development, or racial socialization, is referred to in the research as the "process of receiving messages about what it means to be a member of a particular racial group" (p. 12). This identity development includes an individual's understanding of racial identity and what it means to be part of that racial group, expectations of behavior, and ability from members inside and outside the racial identity group. Harper (2006) and Johnson (2016) asserted that the self-perceptions of Black male students are negatively impacted by systemic racism and its manifestations in society, education, and media, particularly negative stereotypes about academic ability. Unfortunately, the persistence of negative stereotypes surrounding Black males may lead to internalized beliefs about ability and worth among Black males in America. According to Tyler et al. (2016), "Black American school-aged students, particularly Black American males … are subjected to damning and egregious stereotypes both at school, in person, and in the media, which may cost them their lives" (p. 13).

Academic Identity Development. Tangalakis and Vallejo-Peña (2016) explored the connection between Erikson's (1994) description of identity development and the experience of students of color. Tangalakis and Vallejo-Peña (2016) found that, for these students, their understanding of their academic identity is influenced in large part by "the intersections of the contexts in which they find themselves – legal, political, educational and social" (p. 53). Because of this, the academic development processes of students of color may be influenced more significantly and negatively by these outside influences than the same identity development process for their White counterparts.

The influence of same-race peers in academic identity development among Black males in middle and high school has traditionally been determined to harm academic achievement (Ogbu, 1990). Johnson (2016) and Harper (2006) indicated that stereotypes impact what it means to be Black and male in America and that stereotyping impacts a student's social and academic experiences. Additionally, Harper (2006) and Ogbu (1990) discussed the concept of "racelessness" and the "acting White stereotype" specifically among high-achieving Black male students, citing examples of students who feel that they must shed their racial and social identities to explore their academic ones. According to Harper (2010), "studies regarding the experiences of gifted and academically talented African-American youth are fraught with descriptions of negative peer interactions" (p. 340). Often, these students must contend with the additional demands of complex social and emotional pressure, self-confidence, and a feeling of belongingness as they work to reconcile their social, racial, and academic identities (Johnson, 2016). According to Harper (2006), high-achieving Black male students often feel obligated to conduct a "social cost-benefit analysis" of academic success and then change their behavior accordingly (p. 341). Furthermore, researchers have indicated that social ostracism, exclusion from activities outside of school with Black male peers, and even physical altercations could be the result of this racial, social, and academic identity reconciliation process, leading many Black male students to behave in ways that are academically self-handicapping (Harper, 2006; Tyler et al., 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Much research has been conducted on the persistent gap in achievement between Black male high school students and their non-Black male counterparts; however, much of this research is deficit-based (Harper, 2010). In fact, according to Johnson (2016),

> Stories of failure and underachievement dominate the research literature about Black males in American education. This is not a new phenomenon, yet researchers continue to study it, discuss implications, and suggest ways to improve the situation with little success in changing the overall outcome. (p. 20)

Johnson (2016) sought to understand the experiences of high-achieving Black males in primarily White academic spaces, using the stories of these high school students to amplify their voices and to understand their experiences more clearly. However, while Johnson's (2016) research gave important insight into attributes that made these young men unique, he did not use an anti-deficit or counter-deficit lens to frame his questions. Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework introduced a practice of rephrasing inquiries posed by researchers, shifting the focus away from the failure of Black male students and toward their academic achievements. In his work, Harper (2010) developed constructive, success-focused versions of what he calls deficit-oriented questions, employing an "instead of approach" (p. 68).

MIBHS is uniquely suited for this type of asset-based educational research. The school has uniquely diverse demographics, a school-wide emphasis on celebrating culture and identity, and several academic support systems in place, such as AVID, Catalyst and IB. Unlike non-diverse schools where high achieving students of color may be token in advanced courses or honors programs, MIBHS's diverse student population means that

students of color are present in all courses, including Black male students, reducing the impact and pressure of tokenism. A qualitative, phenomenological study exploring how the intersectionality of a Black male student's academic, social, and racial identities helps form how he perceives himself using an anti-deficit approach to the conversations with students and framing questions with a counter-deficit lens would add to the current body of educational research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the internal and external capital or resources that impact the development of the social, racial, and academic identities of Black male high school students and inform perceptions of their academic ability. The research is focused on the experiences of Black male high school students in a diverse semi-suburban school. The researcher utilized Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework to explore and better understand the unique cultural capital that students bring to their educational experiences. Black male students' perceptions of their academic abilities may come from this cultural capital. While potential barriers, such as stereotype threat, tokenism, and academic self-handicapping, may impact a Black male high school student's perception of his academic ability, the focus of this study is to explore the internal and external factors that participants perceive as mitigating those negative factors.

Significance of the Study

The current study results could equip educators and educational leaders with information about the social, cultural, and academic capital accessed by high-achieving Black male students. In providing a counter-narrative to the deficit-based thinking that

historically pervades the research around Black male achievement, educational systems could use this information to not only capitalize on the resources that exist within the Black community in support of students but also help other Black male students identify the resources that are available to them while contributing to the emerging literature of Black males from an anti-deficit perspective. The potential significance is threefold:

1. change the perspective of White educators from a limited, deficit-based perspective on Black male student abilities and potential, showcasing Black male students as academic achievers;
2. support high-achieving Black male students utilizing their capital well by highlighting and recognizing cultural capital; and
3. provide insight to support educational equity by highlighting systemic concerns that may gatekeep marginalized students from accessing resources that match their academic goals.

Delimitations

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) asserted that "delimitations are self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study" (p. 134). Thus, the study was delimited in three ways:

1. Participants were Black male students at MIBHS, a semi-suburban school in the MCSD.
2. Participants were high-achieving Black male students in Grades 11-12 during the 2023-2024 school year.
3. The term high-achieving in this research is limited to Black, African, or multi-racial/Black male students, as determined by the demographic information in

Power School. The student must have earned a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above and be recommended by a counselor, teacher, or administrator. Recommended students must meet one of the following criteria listed below:

a. The student demonstrated leadership potential.
b. The student participated in the AVID or Catalyst college readiness program.
c. The student was enrolled in an AP, IB, Early College Academy, or dual-credit course.
d. The student was actively engaged in school activities, arts, or athletics.

Assumptions

"Assumptions are postulates, premises, and propositions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research" (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 135). This researcher assumed that the students understood the questions and the purpose of the study. Additionally, the researcher assumed that participants were willing to discuss their academic and social resources with the researcher and the stories shared by participants were shared in good faith and honesty. The researcher assumed that school personnel, all educational professionals, nominated appropriate students, following the expectations of the nomination criteria.

Research Question

Creswell (2023) stated that research questions "shape and specifically focus on the purpose of the study" (p. 132). Specifically, research questions serve as a guide, keeping the research focused on the problem. One overarching question guided this research process, focusing on the internal and external capital or resources: How do internal and external factors that influence the development of the social, racial, and academic identities of

Black male high school students inform their self-perceptions of their academic ability and impact their willingness to embrace academic challenges?

Definition of Terms

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) assert that terms used in a study that may not be commonly known should be defined in context. Definitions used in research should come from a professional source. In this study, these terms are defined as follows:

Authentic Self

Johnson (2016) defined the authentic self as "the individual perception of the self that one deems to be undiluted in thought, speech, and action. It is the embodiment of an individual's self-conceived and personally adopted identity" (p. 12).

Cultural Capital

According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital refers to social assets - knowledge, skills, education, and cultural experiences - that individuals possess and that can influence their social experiences, educational success, and career opportunities. In educational research, the idea that students bring cultural capital to their educational experiences emphasizes the role that culture, language, family background, and resources play in shaping students' academic achievement and access to opportunities. Bourdieu (1986) introduced this idea to understand the unequal distribution of cultural knowledge and practices that can contribute to educational disparities. He referred to capital as "the network of relationships [that] is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245).

This concept was further explored by Klimczuk (2015), who provided a succinct definition. Cultural capital, according to Klimczuk (2015), is generally defined as a "set of social features that provide individuals with social mobility and the possibility of changing their hierarchical position in systems such as wealth, power, prestige, education, and health" (p. 1). Klimczuk (2015) adds specificity to the definition, indicating that an individual's cultural capital "includes his or her social origin, education, taste, lifestyle, style of speech, and dress" (p. 2).

Intersectionality

Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality to characterize how identity is multifaceted, ebbs and flows, and is impacted by circumstance. Crenshaw asserted that the multifaceted aspects of a person's life make up identity, shape how individuals perceive and interact with the world, and how the world perceives and interacts with individuals.

Organization of the Study

This study comprises five chapters, each with a distinct purpose. Chapter 1 sets the groundwork by introducing the study's key components, including the background, problem statement, purpose, significance, assumptions and limitations, research questions, and relevant definitions. Chapter 2 offers an extensive review of the research relevant to the proposed research question. The review synthesizes research in areas such as Black male identity development, the importance of peers, educator expectations, deficit-based research around Black male achievement, and the value and attributes of cultural capital. The methodology employed in this study is presented in Chapter 3, which includes the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instruments used, data

collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and the limitations. The study's results are covered in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the study, the findings related to the literature, and the conclusions.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Despite years of work by educational researchers, “most empirical studies amplify minority student failure and deficits instead of achievement” (Harper, 2010, p. 64). This gap in the literature highlights the need for a shift in focus toward exploring these high-achieving, stereotype-busting individuals’ experiences and achievements. The following sections include an analysis of the history of Black educational achievement research in the United States, factors that impact Black male identity development, and the history and value of asset-based achievement research when examining Black male academic achievement.

History of Black Achievement Research

Kolluri and Tichavakunda (2022) examined current peer-reviewed research to understand the way that achievement has been framed in educational scholarship in the last decade. These researchers conducted a content analysis of educational research focused on the academic achievement of students of color that was published in peer-reviewed journals between 2010 and 2020. Using the terms ‘asset’ and ‘deficit’ to guide their search, Kolluri and Tichavakunda (2022) found 113 articles that fit their study requirements. The results of their content analysis found that only “one-fifth of the articles used Harper’s anti-deficit achievement or Valencia’s germinal works on deficit thinking” to frame their approach to student achievement (p. 16). According to Kolluri and Tichavakunda (2022), although deficit framings of marginalized students are recognized as being limited, “There exists a robust history of educational scholarship that unfairly assigns blame to marginalized students and their families for educational

inequality" (p. 3). Factors outside of school, such as family support and household income, were often pointed to in the research as exerting a more substantial influence on academic achievement than school-related or systemic factors.

Similar findings were reported by Russell et al. (2022), who analyzed the research found in 10 peer-reviewed education journals in the United States published over 10 years. The researchers were specifically interested in the use of language used in findings sections of quantitative research regarding students who identify as Black or African American. This search procedure yielded 83 published articles, which were coded for "language that attributes outcomes, effects or results to the racialized group or the intervention or system" (Russell et al., 2022, p. 7). The researchers found that nearly 60% of the research articles in the study utilize language that "creates or perpetuates deficit narratives," specifically regarding the academic outcomes of Black students (p. 1). The researchers concluded that the language used to present findings from educational research is limited in its acknowledgment of the role that the educational system and systemic racism play in achievement outcomes. The following provides some history and context to the history of Black achievement research, examining the history of a deficit-based approach, as well as discussing the concept of an achievement gap between Black students and their White counterparts.

Deficit-Based Approach

In 1990, Ogbu posited the cultural-ecological theory regarding collective identity and oppositional culture among Black high school students, which asserted that academic success might be socially disadvantageous for Black students. Ogbu's (1990) cultural-ecological theory posits that Black students may be seen as "betraying their cultural

identities" by working toward academic achievement and may be met with mockery or rejection by their Black peers (Ogunyemi, 2017, p. 21). According to Ogunyemi (2017), this is sometimes referred to in the literature as the *acting White stereotype*. In 2004, Ogbu clarified his work, asserting that educational researchers have misinterpreted some research findings by ignoring the historical and cultural context of racism in the United States. Referring to the data he collected from four studies conducted in urban high schools throughout California and Washington, DC, Ogbu (2004) asserts that the experiences of high school students mirror those of adults navigating discriminatory systems in the workplace and society. The researcher indicated that students utilize similar coping techniques, which include assimilating, camouflaging, and resisting. According to Ogbu (2004), "it is important to bear in mind that although Black collective identity and cultural frame of reference are oppositional, [not all] are explicitly opposed to adopting White attitudes, behaviors and speech" (p. 24). Ogbu (2004) concluded that Black high school students face the burden of "acting White," similar to the pressure to conform that adult Black Americans have faced, historically. Because of this, students "have developed culturally patterned ways of coping with the dilemma or the burden of "acting White"" (p. 4), which are largely oppositional in nature. Black high school students feel peer or community pressures and "the social sanctions or pressures and the coping strategies that exist in contemporary Black community and are shared by Black students" (Ogbu, 2004, p. 29). Finally, Ogbu (2004) concluded that peer pressures unrelated to the burden of "acting White" also contribute to traditionally poor school performance, including "societal, school and other community forces that discourage academic engagement" (p. 29).

Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2012) conducted a phenomenological study to explore how the lived experiences of Black high school girls either support or refute the cultural-ecological theory posited by Ogbu (1990). He asserted with this theory, often referenced in educational research, that "African Americans do not excel because they view academic achievement as 'acting White'" (Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2012, p. 204). Ogbu (1990) referred to this as "oppositional culture" and argued that these behaviors largely contribute to the persistent problem of low academic achievement among Black students. The goal of researchers Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2012) was to examine the ways that racial and academic identity affect Black girls' academic performance. The researchers chose eight high-achieving Black female high school students from a majority Black working-class high school in the United States. Students in the study had a GPA of 3.5-4.0 and were enrolled in honors or AP courses but were not part of the school's International Baccalaureate magnet program. Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2012) utilized a series of two interviews, followed by two researcher-prompted journal entries written by the study participants. The results were coded, and key themes emerged from the research. The researchers found that the perception of the high-achieving Black girls in the study was that opportunities for academic success, enrichment, and advancement are unequal for high-achieving Black girls, as opposed to their non-Black female counterparts. Many participants cited low expectations from teachers and counselors and an assumption from adults that these students were not interested in academics.

Additionally, participants in Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein's (2012) study indicated that they had to make social sacrifices to focus on their studies and goals.

Participants cited a significant trusted adult at the school who pushed and believed in them despite a general theme of system-wide mistrust. The researchers concluded that while some of Ogbu's (1990) claims held true regarding the systems in place that may prevent Black student success, the oppositional culture assertion did not apply to these students. The results of Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein's (2012) research demonstrated that academic and racial identity are entwined and that Black girls in the study demonstrated a "strong sense of self," creating clear and focused academic goals while maintaining their social and racial identities (p. 212). Participants valued and prioritized their education, viewing it as "a means to reverse the negative social and economic trajectories" that many in their community faced (Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein, 2012, p. 213). The participants in the study shared that they believed that "hard work and positive academic outcomes" would allow them to reach their career and personal goals, opening doors to post-secondary opportunities that had not been an option for their families or other community members (p. 214).

The Achievement Gap

Chambers (2009) critically examined the term *achievement gap*, asserting that this commonly used term fails, especially as it relates to the academic performance of Black students on traditional measures such as state assessments. Instead, the author argues that the term *receivement gap* more accurately characterizes the gap between the opportunities afforded White students that may not be available, systemically, to students of color. The author used a case study conducted at a diverse, semi-suburban high school to highlight these disparities of opportunity. Chambers (2009) asserted that "the use of this term [achievement gap] also represents a deficit model of thinking that blames the

students for their academic performance" (p. 427). The author noted that the focus of educators is often on outputs, such as standardized test scores, neglecting necessary "educational inputs such as caring and well-trained teachers, quality educational resources, and policies that promote social justice for all students from the very start of their school careers" (Chambers, 2009, p. 427), and may level the playing field for students. In Chambers' study, district policies, such as tracking, were identified as structures that are in place that may inadvertently thwart student achievement, separate students, and set the stage for disparities in both outcome and educational opportunities.

McCaig (2020) examined the achievement gap utilizing a mixed-methods approach in a large metropolitan Texas school district. The study was designed to use achievement data and interviews in three schools where the mathematical achievement gap between Black and White students has been markedly lessened. The researcher aimed to determine the effectiveness of staff awareness of the achievement gap, plus intentional professional development designed to lessen this gap, might have on the achievement of Black students. As part of the study, both staff and administrators were made aware of the research on the achievement gap between Black and White students, particularly in mathematics. McCaig (2020) found two themes that emerged in the survey results: the importance of communication and systems.

Communication among staff, as well as between school and home, was a priority for all three schools in the study. McCaig (2020) indicated that study "[p]articipants noted that positive relationships between the teacher and the parent provided rich dialogue regarding the availability of resources in the home, such as books, technology, and food" (p. 62). In the results, the researcher noted a building-wide focus on shared

resources and culturally responsive best practices. There was also an emphasis on communication between teachers and their students, noting that "data supports the belief that expressing high expectations to students and involving students in goal setting" (McCaig, 2020, p. 62).

The second major theme that resulted from McCaig's (2020) study was a focus on systems. McCaig (2020) used the term systems at school to "refer to factors such as, but not limited to, master schedule considerations, staffing, and professional development opportunities" (p. 63). The use of common, brain-based strategies, specifically in math education, was mentioned by "93.6% of participants in this study as a factor influencing the achievement gap" (McCaig, 2020, p. 63). However, the study results revealed an area that participants knew little about that should be systemically addressed. The gap in their knowledge focused on the ways that students were tracked into honors, remedial, or on-level courses.

Black Male Identity Development

As stated in Chapter 1, Tangalakis and Vallejo-Peña (2016) established important links between Erikson's (1994) concept of identity development and the experiences of students from racial and ethnic minority groups. Tangalakis and Vallejo-Peña (2016) discovered that these students' perceptions of their academic identities are significantly influenced by various contextual factors, such as the legal, political, educational, and social environments in which they are situated. The findings suggest that these external factors may more heavily influence the academic progress of students from minority backgrounds than their White counterparts.

The Importance of Peers

Horvat and Lewis (2003) also sought to explore and expand upon one element of Ogbu's (1990) cultural-ecological theory by looking deeply into the conceptualizations of the Black peer group in a public high school setting. Ogbu's (1990) theory asserts that Black high school peer groups often promote the "acting White" stereotype, adding negative peer pressure that encourages underachievement. However, Horvat and Lewis (2003) contended that this assertion limits the value of the Black peer group by describing it as an "undifferentiated body and the few Black students who desire academic excellence as anomalies" (p. 267). Recognizing the diversity within Black peer groups can provide Black students with additional resources to support their academic aspirations while helping them cope with the psychological stress linked to academic achievement. Using a phenomenological approach, Horvat and Lewis (2003) spent over 100 hours observing at two urban high schools in California. In addition to their field notes, they interviewed eight college-bound female Black students during their senior year of high school. They spoke with participants' best friends, their parents, and several staff members familiar with the participants. Several themes regarding the role of peer groups among Black students emerged from the notes and interviews. Horvat and Lewis (2003) noted that "as the participants navigated between their peer groups, they actively *managed* their academic success" (p. 269). Some participants managed their success by employing camouflaging activities, such as downplaying grades, successes, and accomplishments when speaking with some groups of peers. However, the researchers also found that the participants cultivated relationships with other academically successful peers in their schools. Limited views of the Black peer group, like the perspective provided in the original Ogbu (1990) research, hinder the identification of

educational “management” strategies available to Black students. The findings of Horvat and Lewis (2003) revealed that the Black peer group is multidimensional, requiring a more nuanced understanding of how students use peer groups to manage their success. A broader understanding of the Black peer group involves recognizing unique educational success strategies commonly used by Black students. Beyond camouflaging or downplaying their intellectual abilities, students must discern and choose which friends to share their academic achievements and aspirations with and which to distance themselves from claims of academic excellence. Vital to this discussion is the importance of racial identity. It is important to note that while the study participants maintained friendships with White and Black peers, they all “possessed a strong racial identity as young Black women” (p. 274). Horvat and Lewis (2003) underscored the idea that the narrow conceptualizations of the Black peer group, like those posited in Ogbu’s (1990) work, “limit the arsenal of identified educational strategies that are available to Black students” (p. 276).

Harper (2008) interviewed 32 high-achieving Black undergraduate students from six major public universities. Harper’s goal was to understand the role outside-of-class activities and involvement, such as campus leadership positions, Greek life, and off-campus involvement play in developing social capital among these students. Participants held leadership positions in both same-race organizations, such as traditionally Black fraternities, and mixed-race student organizations, such as Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Several themes emerged in the interviews. Students felt that as campus leaders, they had somehow been granted special access to an elite club, yielding positive interactions with university faculty and administrators. This perception highlights the

value of leadership opportunities in the academic development of marginalized students. However, a significant limitation of the research was that participants were already enrolled in a university undergraduate program. Harper (2008) acknowledged that he did not attempt to parse out the social capital these high-achieving students might have brought to their university experiences, such as financial resources, family connections, and experiences in high school. Despite this, the research results provided critical insight into the power of positive same-race and mixed-race peer groups on student success.

Graves (2014) added to the understanding that racial socialization at school impacts student achievement. Graves's research was part of a more extensive study aimed at understanding the factors that impact student success at the high school level. The researcher mined study interview data from 10 high schools in a large metropolitan area in the Pacific Northwest. Graves (2014) chose four Black 10th-grade participants for his smaller study. The researcher utilized the phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory model to "explore the impact of numerous, overlapping contexts and factors on the Black youth identity development process" (p. 6). Previous research on Black students' racialized identity development in the context of school has been limited in two ways. First, it focused solely on the relationship between identity and achievement, ignoring other complicating factors. Second, it "assumed that a school's intentionality around racial socialization would produce specific psycho-social and achievement outcomes" (Graves, 2014, p. 10) from students. However, Graves argued that Black students uniquely define their racial identity in the school context. This unique experience that is part of the identity development of students of color can lead to the development of distinct racialized identities specific to what they perceive as acceptable

at school, which can influence their school-related dispositions and behaviors. Two important themes emerged from this research: The significance of emergent racial identity and student perception of representation. Critical racial awareness refers to an emerging identity in which individuals perceive their racial or ethnic identity within the broader societal context that constructs obstacles based on race. Students who possess critical racial awareness express their awareness of their race-related challenges and actively navigate or overcome them. This process for students is different from the perception of the process that many adults bring to educational experiences. Notably, the researcher concluded that the developmental aspect of racial identity means that high school students are still learning and forming their racial identities. This process can be dynamic and ever-changing, and it can benefit from additional growth and exploration facilitated by educators (Graves, 2014).

The role of peers must be examined when exploring the multi-faceted development of Black male students' identities. Far from being negative influences, the research indicates that peer groups can be tapped into as supportive factors in the lives of high-achieving Black students, offering mentorship and opportunities for students to grow as leaders. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Black students must negotiate expectations from peers, sometimes managing their academic successes to meet in-group expectations. Image management among Black male high school students may lead to academic handicapping or self-sabotaging behaviors, which is a negative peer impact. Mentorship is a powerful example of the positive impact that Black male peers can have on one another. The next two subsections explore the concepts of academic handicapping and self-sabotage, as well as the power of peer mentorship.

Academic Handicapping and Self-Sabotage. Harris (2018) sought to understand Black male educational experiences by examining the "intersectionality of racial self-identification, gender role behavior, and social status" (p. 80). Harris's findings revealed that the combination of expected behaviors of both gender and race leads to handicapping behaviors. Harris (2018) asserted that "Black youth rely on these behaviors to manage self-esteem when faced with the possibility of failure in evaluative contexts" (p. 81), citing self-defeating attitudes and behaviors, such as procrastination and setting unattainable goals. Perhaps because of early gender role socialization messages and few positive academic encounters, these students may develop a tendency to expect failure, whether it is based on reality or their perceptions. As a result, some Black male students unintentionally adopt behaviors that hinder their ability to have successful academic experiences, essentially engaging in self-sabotage.

Robinson et al. (2023) also investigated the role of academic self-handicapping and self-sabotage in Black student achievement at the undergraduate level. Participants in the study included 240 Black undergraduate students from two large midwestern universities. Researchers combed data for evidence of academic self-handicapping, hypothesizing that first-generation status and gender would have a large impact on a student's self-handicapping behaviors. The researchers cited a definition of academic self-handicapping from Berglas and Jones (1978): academic self-handicapping refers to "any action or choice of performance setting that enhanced the opportunity to externalize (or excuse) and to internalize (or accept credit for) success" (p. 1.) Robinson et al. (2023) asserted that academic self-handicapping is often self-protective, and can serve an

impression-management technique, helping to avoid any perceived academic risks or potential appearance of incompetence.

The results of Robinson et al.'s (2023) study contradicted the hypothesis posited by Berglas and Jones (1978), which assumed that first-generation status and gender would lead to more academic self-handicapping behaviors. Robinson et al. (2023) did not find any correlative data linking first-generation or gender to academic self-handicapping behaviors, as they expected. However, Robinson et al. (2023) did find that "higher family support, higher Black identity positive regard, and lower approach/avoidance motivation were uniquely associated with lower ASH [academic self-handicapping]" (p. 27), which is consistent with the research that shows the "importance of family support to academic stress and academic self-efficacy" (p. 28), particularly among Black students.

Mentorship. Harper and Quaye (2007) examined the experiences of high-achieving Black male students involved in student organizations at a predominantly White undergraduate college or university. The researchers aimed to understand the educational experiences of students considered high-achieving Black male student leaders. Questions were designed to garner information regarding a participant's selection of student organizations, active involvement in out-of-class activities, and "the experiences that influenced the development and expression of their racial identities" (Harper & Quaye, 2007, p. 131). The study's results showed that participation in student organizations afforded students opportunities to develop "cross-cultural communication skills, enabled them to learn from others who were racially different and fostered among them care and advocacy for other disadvantaged populations" (Harper & Quaye, 2007, p. 134). The researchers found that Black male students who participated in student

organizations, particularly Black student organizations, found like-minded peers, encouragement, mentorship, and accountability. Additionally, Harper and Quaye (2007) found that "Black [student] groups offered an alternative platform through which to address Black issues, connect with other African-American students, and initiate dialogue and programming without feelings of tokenism" (p. 142).

Gaither (2015) explored the importance of Black male educators' "background experiences and perceptions regarding the complexities of teaching Black male students" (p. iii) in a public high school environment. Data were collected from four Black male educators working with students in a large public high school district in Georgia using a semi-structured interview format. Results from the interviews were analyzed to identify recurring themes. Findings from the study indicated that there are "false and negative perceptions from social media" (Gaither, 2015, p. 2) and a curriculum that is often "culturally irrelevant" (p. 4), which makes connecting to students a challenge. According to Gaither (2015), "there is a need for a more diverse curriculum … professional development for educators, and mentoring programs" (p. 15) for all educators to reach the student population effectively.

Additionally, important themes of educator reflective practices and maintaining high expectations emerged. Gaither (2015) found that most of the educator participants indicated "that it is imperative that they reflect daily and sometimes throughout the day to ensure that they are making proper decisions which are critical in being effective and consistent with their students" (Gaither, 2015, p. 151). Participants noted the importance of planning educational experiences that students of color can relate to and connect with their outside experiences. Participants also discussed the importance of incorporating

real-world experiences and maintaining high expectations. Gaither (2015) shared that the Black male educators who participated in the study "discussed their demands for high expectations while inspiring and motivating them [students] through real world experiences" (p. 152).

Andrews (2016) used a case study format and Harper's (2010) anti-deficit framework to examine the role of leadership training and opportunities on the academic persistence of Black male undergraduate students. In this study, Andrews (2016) identified several factors that might influence the persistence of high-achieving Black male collegians, including self-motivation to excel, parental support, the importance of persisting, religious/church influence, and a supportive learning environment, which mirror the findings of Harper (2010). However, components of participation in campus leadership opportunities were all seen as potentially significant factors that could assist in Black males' academic persistence and career aspirations. Not surprisingly, Andrews' (2016) research indicated that leadership and involvement positively impact students in all demographic groups. However, the Black male students indicated that their participation in student-led activities "influenced their public speaking ability, increased their level of connectedness to the institution, and helped to develop confidence in their ability to lead others and be successful in college" (Andrews, 2016, p. 25).

External Expectations

Expectations and stereotypes may significantly affect the perceptions of academic ability among Black male students. These external factors may lead students to internalize negative beliefs about their ability and potential, causing them to question their intellectual capabilities. Consequently, Black male students may develop a

diminished sense of self-efficacy, which limits their willingness to pursue academic challenges (Johnson, 2016).

Internalized Stereotypes. Tyler et al. (2016) explored the potential internalized racist stereotypes held by Black male high school students and the impact that those stereotypes had on their academic self-handicapping behaviors. Using a survey-based approach, Tyler et al. collected data from 138 Black male students at an urban high school regarding students' internally held stereotypes. The researchers administered the same students a version of the Academic Self-Handicapping subscale of The Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scale. Using Pearson's correlation matrix, the researchers determined a correlation between internalized racist stereotypes and academic self-handicapping behaviors. The results of Tyler et al.'s (2016) study provided evidence that "Black American male high school students who internalized racist stereotypes also engaged in academically self-handicapping behaviors" (p. 23). Such internalized racist stereotypes were also statistically associated with reports of lower psychological engagement in school.

Allen (2017) also investigated the impact of internalized racism on Black male achievement, specifically on the ways that Black male students "understand and react to discourses of Black masculinity that shape their schooling experience" (p. 1). Kaplan (2020) discussed Allen's (2017) study, noting that the study investigated the negative stereotypes that Black male high school students often navigate, including stereotypes that frame young Black men as "hyper-masculine, defiant, and culturally and intellectually deficient," which may "influence how teachers and administrators interpret and react to their Black students" (para. 4). In the results of the research, Allen (2017)

found that young Black men both resisted and embraced these stereotypical views when it came to education. While survey results indicated that they were keenly aware of the racial biases that influenced how they were treated in the classroom, they also blamed their own personal or cultural shortcomings for this perceived educational failure (Allen, 2017).

Allen (2017) underscored the limitations of the mainstream definition of Black masculinity, specifically within the context of public school. For the study participants, it was clear that their experiences relegated Black students to just a few categories, noting that "despite the diversity of Black male performances, it is certain Black masculinities that are recognized and acknowledged more than others" (Kaplan, 2020, p. 22). Allen (2017) noted that for Black male students who are consistently the focus of racist systems and policies, "masculinities of resistance" become identities that are the "most recognized and responded to by school authority" (p. 279). Allen (2017) also asserted that the limited range of masculinities that Black males feel they have access to at school may impact how these students attempt to access social and academic power inside the school community (Allen, 2017).

Educator Expectations. Holst (2016) examined the experiences of Black males who attended an academically rigorous high school where fewer than 3% of the student population is Black. The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of Black male students when they are situated within an environment where academic excellence is a school-wide expectation. Holst conducted three sets of semi-structured interviews: one with students, one with teachers, and one with guardians. Three themes were developed that reflected Black male high school students' struggle to align their social,

societal, and academic identities. Holst concluded that the students in the study found support from teachers and family for their identities as Black males and scholars. All five student participants shared goals for their future that included a college degree and pointed to relationships with teachers and other staff as paramount to their academic success.

Similarly, Johnson (2016) explored the unique experiences of high-achieving Black male students in a predominantly White high school to gain insight into their social and academic identity development. Several themes emerged from the research. First was the persistent nature of racism. Johnson found that the participants felt that racism impacted their social and academic experiences daily. The second theme that emerged was that of internalized stereotypes. Participants indicated that stereotypes impact their ideas of what it means to be a Black male in America and that stereotyping impacted both their social and academic experiences. Finally, the dynamic nature of Black male identity emerged as a theme. Participants spoke about the struggle to find identity and worrying about the identities that society forces upon them, referring to the "warring ideals of limiting constraints vs. personal empowerment to take ownership of their experiences and personal identity development" (Johnson, 2016, p. 117).

Rodríguez and Greer (2017) found similar results using a case study method and narrative storytelling to explore the commonalities of two high-achieving young men of color. Over two years, the researchers gathered narrative stories about educational experiences from elementary school through high school. They concluded that low expectations from educational professionals were a common theme throughout their school experiences. One participant indicated that "their only expectations were

behavioral, not academic" (Rodríguez & Greer, 2017, p. 115), noting a focus on compliance instead of comprehension in his mostly Black, low-income high school.

In a 2022 study, Waire-Harlan examined the role that positive educator expectations have on achievement, specifically looking at the value of formal educator/student mentorship programs at the undergraduate level. The aim of the study was to "provide a firsthand account of Black male students' lived experiences of a formal mentoring program that contributed to their academic persistence" (Waire-Harlan, 2022, p. 16). The researcher followed the experiences of 12 Black male undergraduate students who volunteered to be part of a formal mentorship program at a large state university in Tennessee. According to Waire-Harlan (2022), the formal mentorship program reflected

> a commitment to marginalize students, especially students of color on this campus by providing a brave space for the B2B [Brother 2 Brother] organization to meet weekly, conduct workshops and training unique to the Black male experience, a place for vulnerabilities and insecurities to be address with trained and qualified mentors, and a place for fun, relaxation, and environment conducive to a home away from home. (p. 133)

The results of this study revealed several important themes regarding the importance of positive same-race and same-gender mentorship on the academic success and persistence of Black male students. Many participants noted the value of accountability and a sense of "paying it forward" in mentorship culture, indicating that they found themselves as mentors to others as they worked through the program. The researcher also found that the mentorship program served as a gateway for these students to have a positive relationship with educational leaders. The program afforded mentees the opportunity to "engage with

student-centered administrators, including the chancellor, who took the time to meet with them, listen to their ideas, and empower them" (Waire-Harlan, 2022, p. 136).

Most of the study participants shared that faculty support and positive relationships contributed to their success and persistence to graduation; however, participants noted that they had "some concerns with the lack of faculty of color" (Waire-Harlan, 2022, p. 137). Some participants indicated "frustration and disappointment" when some faculty members expressed stereotypical attitudes about Black achievement or had what students believed to be low expectations for them. Additionally, participants reiterated that the Black male education experience is not monolithic, and individual experiences and needs must be considered (Waire-Harlan, 2022).

Asset-Based Achievement Research

An anti-deficit thinking model in educational research challenges the traditional deficit-oriented perspectives that focus solely on the shortcomings and deficits of marginalized students. The anti-deficit model is a tool used by researchers who seek to understand and value students' strengths, assets, and cultural resources in the educational setting rather than viewing them through a deficit lens. Students from diverse backgrounds are recognized as possessing unique cultural assets and experiences that can enrich their learning and contribute to their academic success. The anti-deficit thinking model helps researchers shift toward a more inclusive and empowering approach to education by shifting the focus from deficits to strengths (Kolluri & Tichavakunda, 2022). The researchers stated, "the tenor of education scholarship has shifted as more educational experts adapt 'asset-based' frames that elevate the strengths of racially

minoritized, working-class students and families to navigate oppressive systems" (Kolluri & Tichavakunda, 2022, p. 3).

Anti-Deficit Approach

Researchers are beginning to challenge assumptions about male students of color and educational achievement. Harper's (2010) anti-deficit reframing impacts the wording and the focus of research questions, providing more nuanced "insights into strategies these students employ to resist the internalization of discouraging misconceptions about members of their racial groups and how they manage to respond productively to stereotypes they encounter" (p. 69). Harper (2012) utilized the anti-deficit framework in his study in which 219 Black male undergraduates at 42 universities across the United States, from public research institutions to liberal arts colleges, were surveyed. The questions in the survey were framed to focus on examining the forms of capital that the participants brought with them into their undergraduate experiences, asking questions about home and family, high school, and peers. The questions were intentionally redesigned to contrast traditional Black achievement research questions. The results of Harper's (2012) research pointed to several trends, including the importance of connecting with same-race, like-minded peers and mentors and early access to advanced STEM programming in and out of their high school.

Womble (2018) utilized Harper's (2010) anti-deficit interview framework to explore the experiences of Black male undergraduate students who are part of a university engineering program, a major traditionally occupied by White male students. Womble (2018) used a qualitative, narrative inquiry research design, focusing on interviews to capture the voices and experiences of Black male undergraduate

engineering students. Several themes emerged, including a feeling of privilege, racelessness, and pressure to succeed as a representative of their race.

Kolluri and Tichavakunda (2022) used a content-analysis approach to examine the trend toward anti-deficit thinking in educational research. In analyzing the research regarding minority achievement, Kolluri and Tichavakunda (2022) discovered

> Most prominently, racist oppression was viewed through the lens of ideology whereby educators perpetuated stereotypes about racially minoritized students. Less often, oppression was described as systemic, whereby inequality stemmed from histories and policies that produced inequitable access to resources and opportunities by race and ethnicity. (p. 38)

Kolluri and Tichavakunda found only rare examples of educational research that seemed to outline ways that "social systems might be altered towards lasting, structural change" (p. 40). Deficit-based research indicates a willingness, even by minority educators, to put the responsibility for system-wide failure on the shoulders of marginalized students and families. Kolluri and Tichavakunda (2022) state: "Teachers are often purveyors of deficit discourses, and even educators from marginalized backgrounds can adopt deficit understandings of their students of color" (p. 22).

Importance of Counter-Narratives

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) demonstrated that CRT could be used to create a research methodology to study the experiences of students and faculty of color more effectively than traditional interview-based research. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) asserted that educational researchers must develop new theories and research methodologies to understand better "those who are on the margins of society" (p. 23) and,

in doing so, challenge the existing research paradigms and procedures that attempt to explain the experiences of students of color. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) define *majoritarian storytelling* as stories "generated from a legacy of racial privilege" (p. 28). They are stories that "carry layers of assumptions" that dominant culture researchers bring with them (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28). Utilizing the lenses of class, gender, and race to examine the experiences of Chicano students, they analyzed stories, finding themes of self-doubt, survivor guilt, imposter syndrome, and invisibility. Throughout this process, four functions of a counter-story emerged: community building, establishing context, opening doors to possibility, and teaching others.

Yosso (2005) asked educational scholars to examine which cultures have capital, focusing on communities of color instead of their White counterparts. Yosso (2005) asserted that CRT "centers the research, pedagogy, and policy lens on communities of color and calls into question White middle-class communities as the standard by which all others are judged" (p. 82). This important shift in the research lens affords scholars the opportunity to view students with a more nuanced perspective, acknowledging the multiple forms of cultural wealth within communities of color. Yosso (2005) identifies several indicators of capital that might not be traditionally acknowledged as assets to students, including "aspirational, social, navigational, linguistic, resistant and familial capital" (p. 80). These forms of cultural capital come from the strength of families and communities and can be used to aid educational professionals in the struggle for educational, social, and racial justice (Moll et al., 1992).

Three Anti-Deficit Approaches

Three notable approaches have emerged to answer the call for more anti-deficit research in education: funds of knowledge, community cultural wealth, and Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework. The funds of knowledge approach values and celebrates the cultural and intellectual wealth and resources that students bring from their homes and communities. This approach emphasizes the importance of educational professionals recognizing and utilizing these resources to promote educational success for students (Rodríguez, 2013).

The community cultural wealth perspective is similar, focusing on the various forms of capital within communities. This approach recognizes the value of leveraging these various forms of capital to challenge deficit-based educational narratives (Yosso, 2005). Harper's anti-deficit achievement framework takes a different approach, reframing research questions to move scholars from a deficit-oriented perspective to an asset-based one. This achievement framework focuses on highlighting the strengths of marginalized students rather than focusing the research on understanding student failures. (Harper, 2010).

Funds of Knowledge. Moll et al. (1992) provided an early example of an anti-deficit approach in their study exploring the *funds of knowledge* concept in the early 1990s. This concept was developed around the idea that marginalized families are rich in cultural and linguistic resources that educators may not understand. Moll et al. (1992) emphasized that "working-class families endow their children with specific experiences and skills that can be leveraged in classrooms" (p. 135). Educators who learn to recognize those unique strengths can tap into them to support and celebrate their marginalized

students and families. Specific skills cited in the research include carpentry, entrepreneurship, household management, farming, and others. These skills are noted by researchers as being part of a "robust ecology for academic development in working-class households" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 139).

However, in 2011, Rios-Aguilar et al. found flaws in this perspective, particularly when recognizing power structures and systems. According to Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011), "[t]he emphasis on the recognition of funds of knowledge has generally not addressed power relations in educational institutions (including classrooms, schools, and colleges/universities)" (p. 166). Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) asserted that the biggest weakness of the funds of knowledge approach is that it still places the responsibility for success on marginalized families and students instead of turning a critical eye on systems and structures. Kolluri and Tichavakunda (2022) argued that the funds of knowledge framework "could benefit from a capital perspective…the more traditional concepts of cultural and social capital can usefully supplement a funds of knowledge approach" (p. 12). Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) cautioned that researchers employing the funds of knowledge framework might not have "explicitly or thoughtfully addressed issues of power, social class, ideology, and racism" (p. 117), instead focusing on family and student level interactions at the micro level.

Community Cultural Wealth. Yosso (2005) took a different perspective on anti-deficit research: looking at *community cultural wealth*. Yosso (2005) identified six unique attributes and resources marginalized communities could often leverage to support academic success. These forms of capital – aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant – are often overlooked in educational research and by

educational professionals working with students. The *community cultural wealth* framework has helped researchers reframe how they view families and communities from problematic to rich sources of capital for students.

Carpenter (2019) utilized Yosso's approach in looking at the cultural wealth that students of color took with them as they transitioned from high school to college. The researcher used a series of semi-structured interviews to explore how 20 first-generation, marginalized students who were graduates from their high school's Upward Bound college preparatory program "implemented their cultural wealth to transition and persist through the postsecondary pipeline" (Carpenter, 2019, p. ii). The researcher used narrative inquiry to collect stories and experiences from participants, noting that this method allowed the researcher not to focus on searching for "specific facts or truth, but rather learning about individuals' experiences through time, and how their choices and lived events impacted their worldview" (Carpenter, 2019, p. 64). The researcher found that the insight gained from these stories told from experiences helped disrupt the deficit-based narratives that dominate educational research and are "based on stereotypes, tropes, and inaccuracies" (Carpenter, 2019, p. 65).

Several important findings emerged from Carpenter's (2019) research, most notably the importance of family or *familial capital.* According to Carpenter (2019), there is value to good educational examples set by family, as well as cautionary stories for these students, serving as examples of what not to do. The researcher contends that both positive and negative examples are powerful, noting that "*familial capital* should encapsulate all learned lessons and attributes of students' familial backgrounds and not just those deemed as virtuous" (Carpenter, 2019, p. 103).

Another important theme that emerged in Carpenter's 2019 research is the importance of *resistance capital*. At its core, the concept of *resistance capital* is founded on the collective experiences of communities of color as they fight for freedom and equal rights. Yosso (2005) referred to *resistance capital* as "knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenge inequality" (p. 80). Many participants shared that their families instilled a sense of pride and cultural identity, teaching them that they are strong enough to overcome systemic obstacles. Carpenter (2019) included the concept of *linguistic capital* as part of this theme, noting that many participants associate their multi-language families and ability to read and write in more than one language as a hidden strength. *Aspirational capital*, defined by Yosso (2005) as the ways students of color persist in their aspirations for their educational future, was also noted by the researcher. Carpenter (2019) notes, "[f]or many students, this identity formation helped their transition and persistence experiences" from high school to college, helping them believe that they were capable of success at the university level (p. 145).

However, like the *funds of knowledge* framework, a limitation of the *community cultural wealth* framework is that systemic power disparities are not addressed as part of the problem but as an external factor. Kolluri and Tichavakunda (2022) argued that "Yosso's conception of oppression largely neglects the systems and policies that subjugate youth long before they enter the classroom" (p. 13). This focus on oppressive systems is supported by the findings of Carpenter (2019), who noted that although the "model does address some of the tenets that impact students of colors' experiences, it does not recognize how systemic racism and discrimination affect their college choice" (p. 146). While Yosso (2005) does an excellent job of focusing on racism as an ideology,

economic capital is outside the scope of his research framework. The goal for anti-deficit researchers to balance their investigation into the structural and ideological processes of oppression is not met by the *community cultural wealth* framework.

Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework. Harper (2010) offered a new perspective on anti-deficit research through his anti-deficit achievement framework. Harper established a pattern of reframing researcher questions from focusing on Black male student failure to academic success. Harper (2010) created asset-based versions of what he refers to as deficit-oriented questions, using an "instead of approach" (p. 68). Harper (2010) asserted that a true anti-deficit researcher would ask, "How are college aspirations cultivated among Black male undergraduate students?" instead of "Why do so few Black male students enroll in college?" (p. 68). This framework is structured in a way that allows researchers to explore not only the personal attributes that students bring but also the systemic and institutional barriers that play an essential part in their success or failure.

The advent of counter-deficit, asset-based frameworks to guide research has advanced the understanding of the educational experiences of marginalized students. Harper's (2010) work calls for researchers to evaluate racism as ideology and structure, focusing on learning more about marginalized communities' funds, wealth, achievement, and assets instead of the structures that may seem to hold them back. Asset-based research questions allow researchers to reframe questions, focusing on the powerful and supportive attributes that students bring to their educational experiences.

Pulcini (2022) applied Harper's anti-deficit framework to explore the attributes of academically successful rural Appalachian students. Pulcini (2022) utilized Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework to write asset-based interview questions

"since like other marginalized groups, Appalachians continue to fall below general society on a number of key performance indicators and are "othered" by mainstream media" (p. 3). The results of the phenomenological study indicated that three main Appalachian values emerged as common assets among study participants. Pulcini (2022) identified these assets as "familyism, neighborliness, and community," all of which were noted by participants as "important assets to their college success that allowed them to form deep interpersonal relationships with others while in college" (p. 83). The results of the study underscored the importance of educators recognizing and celebrating the cultural strengths that students bring to the classroom. Participants in this study relied on important cultural assets "to form interpersonal relationships with faculty, staff, and peers on campus that they identified as being vital to their successful completion of college" (Pulcini, 2022, p. 159).

Pulcini's (2022) study is important because it demonstrates the effectiveness of the anti-deficit framework in studying populations other than undergraduate Black male students. Similar to Harper's (2010) findings, Pulcini (2022) used the anti-deficit framework to uncover both cultural and community assets these marginalized Appalachian students bring to their educational experiences. Additionally, the framework allowed Pulcini to identify potential structural barriers that exist inside educational and political systems unbeknownst to educators.

Summary

Although there is a large body of research on the academic experiences of Black male students, the bulk of it is from a deficit-based perspective. Much of the original research suggesting that Black students respond to oppressive structures in American

culture and public schools by resorting to “oppositional culture” has been debunked, recognizing that the lived experiences of Black students are much more nuanced. It is important to note that the tenor of education scholarship around the academic achievement of marginalized students is changing. Educational scholars have begun the critical shift from deficit-based to asset-based research, working to examine the strengths that students bring instead of focusing on weaknesses.

The experiences of Black male high school students are complex and varied, meaning there is no simple way to gain understanding. However, utilizing Harper’s (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework to examine students’ experiences can provide educators insight into the assets, systems, processes, and experiences that impact their educational journeys. Chapter 3 contains a detailed description of the study design and methodology for this study, which aims to provide deeper insight into the internal and external factors that impact Black male students’ educational experiences.

Chapter 3

Methods

By exploring the ways that internal and external factors influence the development of the social, racial, and academic identities of Black male high school students, the researcher hoped to understand how these factors inform self-perceptions of their academic ability. In this chapter, the methodology used in this study is presented. This chapter includes the research design, the setting, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was chosen to address the research question in this study, which focused on the lived experiences of Black male high school students when it comes to the intersection of their racial, social, and academic identity development. The research question addressed is: How do internal and external factors that influence the development of the social, racial, and academic identities of Black male high school students inform perceptions of their academic ability and impact their willingness to embrace academic challenges? A phenomenological approach was utilized in the study, as it allows the researcher to describe the "common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). In this case, the researcher identified a common lived experience – attending a public high school as a Black male student – and sought to create a new understanding of this shared experience by attempting to explore individual experiences with this phenomenon. Creswell and Poth (2018) refer to this type of phenomenon as a "description of the

universal experience" or a "grasp of the very nature of the thing" (p. 75). This study was designed to highlight the perceptions of Black male high school students regarding the internal and external factors that influence the way that they see themselves academically. Through an initial in-person interview, followed by up to two member checks for clarity and accuracy, participants shared revealing stories and anecdotes about how their educational experiences have shaped their social, racial, and academic identity development. Using this data analysis, the researcher could begin to interpret experiences, looking for common themes in connection with the lived experiences of these students as they navigated high school. A phenomenological approach that utilized member checking to ensure the accuracy of the recorded interviews was selected because the qualitative paradigm assumes that "reality is socially constructed and it is what participants perceive it to be" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125).

Setting

The setting for this study was a semi-suburban International Baccalaureate high school just outside of a major midwestern city. This school was intentionally chosen as it has a diverse student population representing more than 30 cultures and languages (MoDESE, 2022). On average, about 38% of the 1,680 students at MIBHS are White, making it an unusually diverse high school in the region. Additionally, MIBHS houses several programs designed to encourage academic achievement besides the IB and IB Career Certificate programs, including AVID, AP Capstone, Gold Medallion Honors Diploma, the Early College Academy, and the Catalyst college readiness program, making it uniquely suited for this research (AVID coordinator, personal communication, May 8, 2023).

Sampling Procedures

Criterion sampling was chosen for this study. This method is beneficial for phenomenological studies when the participants in the study have all personally experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The criteria chosen for this study align with the foundational study for this research: The National Black Male College Achievement Study (Harper, 2010). Research participants were nominated for the study by school personnel based on the following criteria:

- The student must be a Black, African, or multi-racial/Black male, as determined by the demographic information in Power School.
- The student must have earned a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above.
- The student must have been recommended by a counselor, teacher, or administrator. Recommended students must meet at least one of the following criteria listed below:
    - The student demonstrated leadership potential.
    - The student participated in the AVID or Catalyst college readiness program.
    - The student was enrolled in an AP, IB, Early College Academy, or dual-credit course.
    - The student was actively engaged in school activities, arts, or athletics.

The researcher planned to interview between 10 and 15 participants. For phenomenological studies like this one, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested three to 10 participants as an appropriate number of interview respondents. According to Islam and Aldaihani (2021), once the researcher begins to see similar findings in the answers of

participants, the point of saturation is reached. In the current study, the researcher reached the saturation point at 12 participant interviews.

Instrument

The interview protocol used by the researcher was modeled from the work of Harper (2010), which reframed "deficit-oriented research questions regarding students of color and their trajectories" using anti-deficit language (p. 63). The primary interview questions and the subsequent member-checking opportunities were designed to elicit responses addressing the research question. Specifically, the researcher created interview questions to illuminate the cultural capital these students bring to their high school experience.

The researcher modeled the interview protocol from researchers Solórzano and Yosso, who took a unique approach to their research. In their study, Solórzano and Yosso demonstrated that CRT could be used to create a research methodology to study the experiences of students of color more effectively than traditional interview-based research. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) asserted that educational researchers must develop new theories and research methodologies to understand better "those who are on the margins of society" (p. 23) and, in doing so, challenged the existing research paradigms and procedures that attempt to explain the experiences of students of color. Majoritarian storytelling was defined by Solórzano and Yosso (2002) as stories that are "generated from a legacy of racial privilege" and are stories that "carry layers of assumptions" (p. 28) that dominant culture researchers bring with them. To create the critical race methodology, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) used the lenses of class, gender, and race to examine the experiences of Chicano students. They used secondary data analysis to comb

those stories for concepts of self-doubt, survivor guilt, imposter syndrome, and invisibility. Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) and Harper's (2010) protocols formed the basis of this researcher's interview method.

The interview included eight questions or prompts with follow-up questions to allow the participants to elaborate on their experiences. The questions were formatted using the anti-deficit framework discussed by Harper (2010). This framework allowed the researcher to reframe interview questions, moving away from questions that amplify the obstacles and failures of students of color to questions designed to identify the internal and external factors that afford them academic success. The following statements and questions were posed to each of the participants:

Interview Question 1 (IQ1): Tell me about yourself. How would you describe yourself academically and socially at school?

- Follow-Up Question 1 (FUQ1): How long have you been part of the MIBHS feeder pattern, or "Hornet Nation"?
- Follow-Up Question 2 (FUQ2): What diploma option (IB, IBCC, AP Capstone, Gold Medallion Honors Diploma, College Readiness) are you pursuing?

Interview Question 2 (IQ2): Explain your decision process when selecting which diploma you wanted to pursue.

- Follow-Up Question 1 (FUQ1): How were you informed of the diploma options offered by the school? Who informed you of those options?

- Follow-Up Question 2 (FUQ2): What factors influenced your diploma choice?
- Follow-Up Question 3 (FUQ3): Whom did you include or speak with during your thought process about this decision? Was there one big influence or did you talk to several people before making your choice?
- Follow-Up Question 4 (FUQ4): Did you have any conversations with family members surrounding your decision to choose your diploma program? What did those conversations sound like?

Interview Question 3 (IQ3): Please describe some of your middle school academic experiences that contributed to your success in high school.

- Follow-Up Question 1 (FUQ1): Tell me a little about your course selection process in middle school.
- Follow-Up Question 2 (FUQ2): Tell me about any time that you were interested in signing up for a course in middle school but did not.
- Follow-Up Question 3 (FUQ3): Who provided you with information about available courses? How were your options communicated?
- Follow-Up Question 4 (FUQ4): How did the ways in which they communicated with you – or the METHOD of their delivery - impact your decision?

Interview Question 4 (IQ4): Please describe some of your high school academic experiences that contributed to your success in high school so far.

- Follow-Up Question 1 (FUQ1): How do your current academic choices shape your academic choices when considering future experiences?

Interview Question 5 (IQ5): Tell me a little about your course selection process in high school.

- Follow-Up Question 1 (FUQ1): Who provided you with information about course options? How was it communicated? Did the METHOD in which they communicated with you impact your decision?
- Follow-Up Question 2 (FUQ2): Tell me about a time you were interested in signing up for a course or program in high school, but did not.
- Follow-Up Question 3 (FUQ3): Do you feel like there has ever been a time when a discriminatory process or system kept you from accessing an academic opportunity?

Interview Question 6 (IQ6): Describe what "academic success" means to you.

- Follow-Up Question 1 (FUQ1): Describe what academic success means to your family.
- Follow-Up Question 2 (FUQ2): How do you know they feel that way?
- Follow-Up Question 3 (FUQ3): What does academic success mean to your friends and peers?
- Follow-Up Question 4 (FUQ4): How do you know they feel that way?

Interview Question 7 (IQ7): Describe some of the academic successes you experienced at NKCHS.

- Follow-Up Question 1 (FUQ1): To what do you attribute your academic successes?

Interview Question 8 (IQ8): Describe some of the obstacles that you have encountered while you have worked toward academic success at NKCHS.

- Follow-Up Question 1 (FUQ1): Do you feel like you have faced academic or social obstacles in school because of your race or gender?
- Follow-Up Question 1 (FUQ1): How did you overcome those obstacles?
- Follow-Up Question 2 (FUQ2): Describe some of the things that are your "tools for academic success."

Interview Question 9 (IQ9): What advice or tips would you share with Black male middle school students regarding their high school experiences?

- Follow-Up Question 1 (FUQ1): What other experiences would you like to tell me about?
- Follow-Up Question 2 (FUQ2): What questions do you have for me?

Data Collection Procedures

Before collecting data, the researcher submitted the research proposal application to the research review committee at MCSD; the request was approved on May 4, 2023 (see Appendix A). Next, a research request was submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board on May 10, 2023, and was approved on May 17, 2023 (see Appendix B). The researcher began the data collection process in August 2023. Emails

were sent to four assistant principals, the counseling team, and the IB, AVID, and Catalyst program coordinators at MIBHS. Once a list of 30 potential participants was received, the researcher sent a letter to each potential participant's parents or guardians, explaining the project and their student's participation.

For students under 18, a letter was written in English, Somali, and Arabic to provide clarity to parents and guardians, explaining the purpose of the study and the research questions. The guardian consent form for students under 18 years old was included with the letter. A guardian signed a consent form for the student who was under 18 to allow their participation. The communication to parents and parental consent forms can be found in Appendix C.

Students who were 18 or older also received a letter written in English, Somali, and Arabic to provide clarity to parents and guardians, explaining the purpose of the study and the research question. Students 18 and over signed the participant consent form, which contained information about how to opt out of the research process at any time. The communication to students and student consent forms can be found in Appendix D.

Two mock interviews were conducted with students who matched the established criteria but did not attend MIBHS. The mock interviews were conducted in person with observers who watched for errors or potential bias in the questions or the interview technique. The responses from the two mock interviews were not included as part of the data that was collected, but served as a practice for the interview process.

Each participant was made aware that the interview would be audio recorded, and they would have the opportunity to read, clarify, and correct the transcript after the

interview was concluded and transcribed. The identity of participants would be protected, as detailed by the guardian and participant consent form, by randomly assigning pseudonyms to each participant. This assigned designation would be used in place of names or identifiers throughout the research process, including describing the results. Initial interviews were conducted in a conference space in the Student Services Center in the main building on the MIBHS campus. This location was chosen because of its proximity to other adults (school counseling, college advising, and social work offices) for both the safety of the researcher and participants and to address comfort, familiarity, transportation, and time concerns. Additional care was taken to ensure that the parents or guardians were comfortable with the research process, after which the participants were scheduled for their face-to-face interview at MIBHS.

Interviewing is a unique social interaction based on conversation, anecdotes, and storytelling, which can provide insight for qualitative researchers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were reminded during the interview that their participation was voluntary, that they could choose not to answer any question, and that they could opt out of the interview process at any time. The data safeguard and anonymity plans were shared, as well as the plan for data recording, storage, and use. All interviews were recorded digitally using Audacity on a password-protected iPad so the information could be appropriately sorted and coded after the interview process was complete.

An interview protocol is often bookended by inviting open-ended questions at the beginning and inviting participant questions or additional information to conclude the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). To create a safe and welcoming atmosphere for the initial interview, the researcher met each participant at the conference room door for

informal introductions and to answer any questions the participants might have about the process. From there, the formal interview protocol began with a set of demographic questions, followed by a set of questions and follow-up questions associated with their academic experiences written by the researcher. A research assistant was utilized as a third party in the room to minimize potential risk or bias.

After the initial interview, the researcher transcribed the data using Otter, an online subscription that qualitative researchers often use to create an accurate electronic transcription of interviews. Following this, transcripts were sent to participants so they could review the interviews to ensure that the transcripted message reflected what they meant to say in the interview. They were also encouraged to add any clarifying or additional information to their interview transcript that they felt more accurately described their experiences. The researcher planned for up to two member checks with each participant, depending on the level of clarification needed. This process of member checking was necessary not only to ensure accuracy but also to safeguard the trust of the participants as they shared their stories with an unknown researcher.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

After the data was transcribed, the researcher utilized and open coding process to help systematically code the content of each interview and organize these codes into themes and categories. Using the process outlined by Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), the researcher created categories, found themes, and organized the stories into patterns - coding the data in a way that helped create a new understanding. First, the transcripts were read in their entirety, aiming to get “a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts” (Creswell, 2023, p. 187). From there, the researcher built detailed

descriptions using keywords and codes to create categories. These categories helped the researcher identify common themes and sub-themes found in the transcriptions of the interview data, leading the researcher to draw conclusions based on these common themes (Creswell, 2018).

Reliability and Trustworthiness

Establishing reliability and engendering trust were accomplished throughout the research process. Creswell and Miller (2000) explained that establishing reliability in qualitative research is a recursive process, requiring the researcher to return to the data repeatedly to see if the constructs, categories, explanations, and interpretations make sense. Researcher reflexivity, or the examination of "social, cultural, and historical forces" that may influence the researcher's perception of the data collected, helps identify and suspend potential bias as the study proceeded (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Additionally, member checking was employed to capture the most accurate representation of participant experiences. Member checking, as defined by Creswell and Miller (2000), is when transcripts are returned to participants, who then have the opportunity to add credibility to the study by responding, correcting, and adding detail to both the interview transcript data and the final narrative of the research. Member checking was used to ensure clarity and accuracy, as transcripts of interviews were returned to participants for feedback and notes. This way, participants were encouraged to confirm the accuracy, credibility, and interpretation of the information and make corrections to ensure that the narrative account in the data matched the participant's intent.

Researcher's Role

One of the hallmarks of qualitative research is that the researcher is engaged in a "sustained and intensive experience" with participants, which may introduce an array of personal, ethical, and strategic considerations when considering researcher bias (Creswell, 2023, p. 187). At the time of the study, the researcher had spent more than 20 years teaching secondary English, working with marginalized students inside urban and semi-suburban schools. As an equity advocate for the MCHS District, the researcher has participated in four years of diversity equity and inclusion and culturally responsive teaching as a staff developer in a train-the-trainer model, helping the faculty and staff across the district to become more focused on equity while working to meet the needs of marginalized students. Additionally, because the researcher is the parent of a Black male child, she has a vested interest in the outcome of this research. To maintain objectivity and perspective during both the interview process and the coding and analysis of the data, the researcher relied on reflexivity and member checking to minimize potential bias. According to Patnaik (2013), researcher reflexivity calls for "turning the investigative lens towards oneself" (p. 100) by acknowledging that the researcher brings experiences, beliefs, and assumptions into the research process. The researcher relied on introspective reflexivity to maintain research focus and objectivity by bracketing biases, attitudes, and assumptions of the researcher to minimize the impact of their influence on the research process or outcomes. Dowling (2006) suggested bracketing should be done in three phases: Before, during, and after the interview process. This bracketing process was done through journaling to capture the researcher's thoughts, manners, or insights as part of each interview, thus compelling the researcher to examine her perceptions as they might

impact the interpretation of the data presented. The researcher acknowledges the relational nature of qualitative research, and used reflexivity to minimize the impact of bias. Patnaik (2013) noted that methodological reflexivity – or reflexivity from a critical standpoint – helped ensure standardization in the procedure, process, and data evaluation, strengthening the rigor of the research. Thus, the researcher maintained an objective and professional approach and perspective throughout the interview and analysis process, asking questions and follow-up questions to keep the interview format as controlled as possible while allowing for participant storytelling. Although the researcher took steps to mitigate the potential for bias, there may have been unintentional or unplanned bias throughout the research process.

Limitations

Factors that fall outside of the control of the research but may impact the interpretation of the research findings are considered limitations, according to Lunenburg and Irby (2008). Initially, the researcher invited 30 participants who were a representative cross-sectional subset of Black male students. Since the informed consent was a two-step process - guardian consent and participant consent – potential participants under 18 may have opted out of the study, impacting the cross-sectional representation of the subset of Black male students. Additionally, as is true with all phenomenological research, the anecdotes and experiences shared with the researcher are only as accurate as the memory and honesty of the participant who shared the story.

Summary

Chapter 3 included a description of the qualitative research process utilized in this study, including the initial interview and the member-checking process. The chapter

described the methodology employed by the researcher, including the research design, sampling procedures, instruments, data collection procedures, analysis of data and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, researcher's role, and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 contains the findings of the study.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways that internal and external factors influence the development of the social, racial, and academic identities of Black male high school students and inform their perceptions of their academic ability. The researcher modeled questions from Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework to explore and better understand the educational experiences of high-achieving Black male high school students. Presented in this chapter are the findings gathered from 12 interviews with Black male high school students during the 2023-2024 school year at a diverse semi-suburban high school. Prior to a detailed discussion of the findings and themes that emerged from the study, an overview of demographic data for the study's participants is presented. This demographic overview is accompanied by the process by which the participants were contacted and invited to participate in the study. Next, the themes that emerged from the participants' interview responses are discussed in relation to the study's research questions. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the findings from the study.

Demographic Data

The researcher contacted the administrative team at MIBHS, sharing the details of the research and requesting names of students who fit the criteria. The administrative team invited the researcher to address the Black Student Union during a meeting so that students understood the purpose of the research. At that time, students who met the criteria were given consent forms to be signed by a guardian. The researcher conducted

interviews on two different days, interviewing six students on the first day and six on the second day, for a total of 12 study participants.

Participants in this study were students who met the criteria for participation. All were Black, male, met GPA and leadership requirements, and were recommended to participate in the study by a staff member. Research participants were nominated for the study by school personnel based on the following criteria:

- The student must be Black, African, or multi-racial/Black male, as determined by the demographic information in Power School.
- The student must have earned a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above.
- The student must have been recommended by a counselor, teacher, or administrator. Recommended students must meet one of the following criteria listed below:
    - The student demonstrated leadership potential.
    - The student participated in the AVID or Catalyst college readiness program.

During the interview, participants were asked to describe themselves as students, as well as to identify why they believed that they were chosen to participate in a study about high-achieving Black students. The students shared information about the way that they perceive themselves, both academically and socially.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

	N
MIBHS Diploma Goal	
International Baccalaureate	5
AP Capstone	1
District Platinum Diploma	6
Leadership Program Involvement	
AVID	7
Catalyst	1
Other	4
Years in District	
5-10	7
<5	5

Note. Frequencies based on interview responses from participants.

When asked why they thought they were selected for this study involving high achieving Black young men, five mentioned that they have good behavior or never get in trouble at school, five talked about how they were well-liked or well-known by adults in the building, and five mentioned that they were in an academic program designed for high achievers. Programs mentioned were AVID, Catalyst, athletics, and a leadership activity like student council. All 12 appeared to be humble regarding their academic success and seemed pleased to have been selected and seen by adults as high achievers. All student participants were juniors or seniors at MIBHS.

Qualitative Data Analysis

After conducting the interviews, transcribing the audio recordings, and submitting the transcripts to the participants for member checking, the researcher reviewed each transcript in detail to identify common themes that recurred throughout the participants' responses. The researcher utilized the open coding process described by Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), which includes highlighting key words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs from the participants' responses and using tentative, descriptive labels to categorize the highlighted passages, with the understanding that the labels will likely evolve and change throughout the analysis process. Using these tentative labels, the researcher constructed a spreadsheet to organize the tentative labels and their initial alignment with the study's research question. The researcher reviewed the completed spreadsheet to identify and consolidate related labels into overarching findings that emerged from the participants' responses. In total, five overarching findings emerged from the qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts.

1. Personal goals and focus on academic priorities were reported to be the most impactful internal factors that determined success.
2. School faculty and staff encouragement was the most impactful external factor that determined success. Mentioned specifically were the school administration and staff of specific school programs: AVID, Catalyst, and athletics.
3. Family support and encouragement were key.
4. Peers have an impact, both positive and negative.

5. Academic self-confidence and personal tools for academic self-advocacy are vital.

While these findings were common among participants, several nuances exist when looking at their experiences as students. The following sections present the participants' experiences, and how the themes identified in these findings impacted them as they navigated high school as a high achieving Black male student.

Finding 1: Personal Goals/Academic Priorities

The insights gained from talking to participants shed light on the importance of establishing personal academic goals and making school a priority. Six participants equated academic success with a GPA above 3.2, specifically, while 10 participants mentioned GPA as part of their goal-setting process in general. Participant 3 stated, "College is the goal. I set goals myself, like certain GPA, which like this year is a 3.3 or higher. I'm achieving. Just setting goals for myself and achieving those goals, I call that academic success." Similarly, Participant 10 is focused on setting academic goals that will set him up for a successful college career after high school. He indicated that his goals stretch beyond his four years at MIBHS, stating,

> Overall goal: I want to get a full ride to college. So, I really feel like I'm not academically successful until I can get out of college. I want to be able to have a successful career, so I'm always chasing that. You know, I'm never gonna be perfect. So, it's all just about, like, the journey for me.

The educational journey sentiment was echoed by Participant 12. He indicated that while he has a GPA goal for himself, his ultimate objective is to learn as much as he can in high school and be ready for his next educational chapter:

> But there's another part to it, you know, is really striving and seeing a purpose for what you're doing. And having that purpose and that goal and the reasoning behind the things you do, not just the end goal. You know, it's a journey for everything you do. The end goal is just obviously the fruits of your labor …. The best part about academic success is just the journey.

Ten participants indicated that a desire for academic challenge keeps them focused on their goals and interested in course content. Participant 4 talked about the process of choosing classes for his senior year. He decided to take a particularly challenging college-level English course his senior year, stating, "Something told me I that I need to challenge myself this year, even though it's my last year." He went on to add that no one influenced him to do so, and that many of his friends chose easier courses for their senior year, but he prefers a challenge. He said, "I take it upon myself to like, challenge myself. I can master challenging stuff." Participant 3 shared that he learned as a freshman that he enjoys challenging courses more than easy ones. As a high achiever, he feels that he performs better in courses that make him think, stating, "With easy classes comes boredom. You start losing focus. I thought I gotta do something that would keep me going. Challenge, I just wanted a challenge, so I picked a couple of harder classes."

Participant 9 discussed the importance of persistence and determination in the face of challenging coursework, particularly in the IB program. He talked about how he chose the IB program as an eighth grader, but the real test was when he transitioned from Pre-IB into IB courses during his junior year. "And I signed on; it was a blind sign. [The hard part was] *staying* in IB when it got hard. It was being consistent. I know it is not insurmountable. I was able to fight [through] IB." He indicated that his family and his

teachers encouraged him to be patient with himself and give himself the grace to learn how to study at the advanced level necessary for IB coursework; however, consistency and focus were the keys to his success in the program.

Finally, six participants noted that working toward a college scholarship or free college helped them keep their academic focus. Participant 12 talked about watching his two older sisters get scholarships, which allowed them to be able to attend a four-year university. Setting a similar goal for himself, he said that he started applying for scholarships his junior year, thinking, "If I get a scholarship, you know, at least I can have that as my safe plan. And I was honestly I was putting in the work." Pairing academic scholarship money with a potential athletic scholarship is the end goal for Participant 1. He shared that his two older brothers went to college on football scholarships, and he plans to do the same, pairing athletic and academic scholarship money. "Getting even potentially an academic scholarship…getting into a good university…getting a good degree. That's just the end goal. I can maintain a family and myself very nicely, and that's the most successful you can get."

Participant 1 shared that once he set his sights on a college scholarship, it was easier for him to stay focused on his school work. He mentioned that his older brother set an important example, as he was attending a university on a full scholarship. Now that the precedent has been set, Participant 1 is confident that he can set and reach that goal, as well. He shared, "I've been on all my stuff a little more because I have a goal in mind now. Because if I didn't have goals, most likely I'd probably be lazy, doing nothing. It gives me something to work towards." Participant 7 shared that he has his sights set on a

business degree, so an academic scholarship, paired with an athletic scholarship, motivates him to perform in the classroom and on the court.

Two young men indicated that earning a scholarship was a priority for their parents, which made it important to them, as well. Participant 8 shared that his parents believe that earning financial aid was vital if he wanted to go to college. He explained, "Graduate and get scholarships…that is their [parents] priority." Another student, Participant 10, shared that he has been inspired to work toward a scholarship because his mother attended college on a scholarship. His mother has imparted to him the importance of maintaining his grades in college, as well, in order to keep the scholarship that she is confident he will earn. A senior student, Participant 12, shared the story of when he learned that he had earned a scholarship. He shared about the moment he received the scholarship email, stating:

> I was like, oh my God, there is no way I really got the [scholarship]! I just couldn't believe it. It was a surreal moment, you know, and I was just like, that kind of lifted some weight off my shoulders in a way. I feel like I have something I can, you know, do for certain now.

Finding 2: School Faculty and Staff Encouragement

When discussing the external factors that positively impact academic success, school faculty and staff were mentioned by all 12 participants. Teachers, coaches, and administrators believing in the ability of their students was mentioned. Participant 10 talked about how, in the IB program, "I've always been seen as a smart kid. So, it's all about just like holding on to the expectations." Participant 11 shared a similar experience. He took an on-level science course as a junior this year, but his teacher saw his potential

and encouraged him to sign up for an advanced science course his senior year. He indicated that his teacher's belief in his ability gave him the courage to choose advanced science this year.

Participant 9 talked about the way that his teachers encourage him to keep going when the work gets challenging. He shared a conversation that he had with a teacher, saying,

> I was struggling very hard in classes, and he was like just talking to me: You know, it takes time to really learn this. This is not normal teaching. This is not normal learning. You're on a higher, advanced level. You have to be patient with yourself and trust and believe that when you take the time to study and really understand it, that you will succeed.

Participant 2 echoed the importance of teacher encouragement, particularly in the face of peers who may be discouraging. He shared, "The teachers influence me to keep going. Students [say] IB is too hard. I [made] that decision on my own. I didn't listen to them [peers]. The teachers I listen to know more. They tell me to push myself." Participant 7 talked about a time when a teacher saw ability and potential when the student could not see it in himself. He was working through a challenging, upper-level math course and did not think he was doing well. However, the teacher noticed his level of understanding and asked if he would serve as a tutor for others who were struggling. He shared that her confidence in him made a difference in how he saw himself as a math student.

Eight participants mentioned specific academic programs – AVID, IB, and Catalyst – as contributing to their academic success in high school. Five participants mentioned AVID, specifically expressing their belief that their participation in that

program had a positive impact. Participant 1 credits AVID for supporting him as he chose to challenge himself with honors courses as a freshman. Participant 2 specified that the organization, study, and note-taking skills that he learned in AVID is one of the reasons that he maintains his goal GPA. He shared, “Definitely look into AVID. If you want to go to college. They teach you how to be organized and take notes. I’d say [AVID] was the best class that anybody could take. It gets you prepared for college.” AVID teachers served as an encouraging influence for this student, helping him focus on what will prepare him for challenging coursework and college. Participant 2 shared that his AVID teachers have helped him focus on grades, college prep courses, and navigating the college application process. He emphasized the importance of the teachers in the AVID program, noting, “I think the AVID teachers are like the biggest influence on kids if you take the class, especially if you want to go to college. Those are the best people to listen to and go to.” The AVID program has high standards for students. Participant 6 talked about the role that his AVID teachers have in the course selection process, ensuring that all AVID students are college-ready. Participant 8 talked about the accountability that AVID provides him, sharing expectations, which include sitting in the front of the classroom and using a specific organizational system. AVID teachers are great resources; they “always want to make sure that you get the best information, you get the best deals, and, you know, shortcuts and things that other people aren’t doing that sets you up for success in college.”

Catalyst was mentioned by Participant 9, who shared that Catalyst is a district program designed to “promote students to different colleges, and it’s to advise us on how to get there.” He also indicated that in order to be part of the Catalyst program, he needed

to maintain a 3.5 GPA while taking several IB or AP courses. The high expectations also came with support from the Catalyst leader and like-minded Catalyst peers.

Coaches have an impact on the way that students prioritize academics, as well. Participant 4 talked about the way that his coach helped him stay "on point" on the field and in the classroom:

> He taught me how to be laser-focused in every single part of my life. And that's not even just with football, I mean, academically, in my family relationships, all of it, how to be focused on that one thing, and to shut out everything else other than is right here.

Participant 7 mentioned that his coach has high academic standards for the team. He expects players to have a 3.3 GPA, so everyone must focus on their studies during the season. He also talked about the way that his coach talks about college and learning to be accountable on your own. "When I go to the next level [college]. Like right now, I have people monitoring me. But when I go to the next level, I will be by myself." Participant 9 shared a story that was formative to him. In seventh grade, he was struggling in an honors math class. He was beginning to think that he did not belong in the class, but his math teacher, who was also his football coach, encouraged him:

> He said, you just got to really study; you got to take the time out to really be dedicated to academics. At the time, I was an athlete. It was the first time getting into football. So, he was like, you really got to learn how to balance being a student-athlete; you gotta learn to which one comes first, student or athlete. So, you have to prioritize this work that's going on in this room so you don't get behind.

Finally, seven participants mentioned the importance of Black male staff members. Participant 10 talked positively about the Black staff at MIBHS, "We have a lot of high achieving Black principals. Actually, we have two Black principals, and then we have a Black female assistant principal. It's really good to actually see high achieving Black people outside of just sports." The importance of Black staff was echoed by Participant 4: "Yeah, I find it [Black staff] extremely important because it kind of reflects off of a kid like me. I want to have an older Black male who's successful. Like, it tells me that maybe I can be too." Seeing staff with advanced degrees and in leadership positions is encouraging for students. These men serve as important role models. Participant 11 shared,

> It [Black staff] does very much because, like, seeing them and seeing men like that, you know, our culture. You know, people always look down on us and stuff like that, and it's kind of hard to deal with all the time. But having people like that around is always a great thing for you because, you know, it takes away the thoughts in your head. It replaces [those thoughts] with positive thoughts and gives you hope that you know there is always a chance to make it better. Yeah, I could be just like Dr. Jones.

Not only do these Black men serve as academic role models, but they also teach important lessons outside of the classroom, as well. Participant 4 shared a story about his football coach and assistant principal. The coach told the students that when he started in the weight room, he noticed that all the men in positions of power wore ties to work every day. He began to wear a tie every day, even though he worked in the weight room. Eventually, he earned the job of assistant principal. Participant 4 found this lesson

impactful, sharing, “to see him actually be able to be in his role and still be himself is a very important thing because that’s me. I can bring my culture, and I can bring my opinion to wherever I go.” Similarly, Participant 3 shared that he feels that his Black coaches have a higher expectation of him than his White coaches, both on the field and in the classroom. When discussing his connection to his Black coaches and teachers, he stated,

> [I can] connect with them in a way I wouldn’t be able to, you know, maybe another coach, a White coach, outside of the field. You know, the coaches do a lot with us, making sure we stay on task. He doesn’t want us to have hoods, no hats, you know, making sure we’re not sagging. You know, it’s a tie on Fridays. Yeah, it’s a suit and tie on Friday. He’s getting us right, you know, telling me how to talk. They help a lot, the coaching staff. I mean, yeah, those are the main Black men that make a difference.

Finding 3: Family Support

All 12 participants discussed the importance of having a supportive family. Eight participants indicated that their family members encourage them to take challenging courses and work hard to succeed in them. Eight participants shared that they look up to members of their family as examples of academic success, and seven participants felt that it was important that they share the same definition of academic success as their family members. Participant 2 shared that his parents encourage him to take his academics very seriously. He said that his parents “want me to do as best as I can in school because they know it’s going to be needed if I want to go to college and have a good life. So, I just always took it serious.” He added that his hallway and classroom behavior is reserved

because school is important to his family. His attitude about school reflects the importance placed on academics by his parents. Participant 12 also indicated that his older siblings shared his academic priority and helped him make his course selection decisions, ensuring that he was reaching his academic potential. He talked about how his older siblings were raised in the same environment, and they knew what they could achieve. When it came to the course selection process, he said that he trusted his siblings to help him make choices that helped him meet his academic goals. He expressed, "[My] two older sisters advised me to take challenging classes to challenge myself and be achieving. They were achieving students as well. So, they were just pushing me out of love, or I don't know, high expectations."

Family played an important part in setting academic goals for 6 participants. Participant 12 shared that he is the son of immigrants, and he knows what his mother sacrificed to bring his family to America. He says that his mother has high expectations of him, which he feels a responsibility to uphold, sharing,

> [Mom], like I said, was [an] immigrant and working. I'm saying, like, seeing her life, really, we have no option but to succeed because of what she went through. You feel that like this person was struggling their whole life. I have to, you know, be something. Yeah, honor that struggle, honor that struggle.

Participant 2 talked about how his family helped keep him on track despite pressure from friends to focus on things besides academics. He credits his parents, saying,

> It's really just my parents, how much they pushed it [academics] on me and made me realize how important it is for me to get my education and want to actually go to college so I can get a good job and all that. Yeah, just from listening to them. I

> just never listen to anybody around me. I still be cool, but I never let them [friends] influence me.

Not only did participants credit their families for helping them set lofty goals, but they also helped encourage the perseverance necessary to reach those goals. Participant 9 talked about the way that his mother encouraged him to stay in the IB program despite the hours of extra homework and the robust expectations of junior and senior year IB courses. He shared that many students drop out of the IB program between sophomore and junior years and that many of his friends encouraged him to drop the program, as well. His mother helped him keep his focus. He said that the more he worked through the rigor of the IB program, the more he relied on the advice of his teachers and his family. He said, "my mom said you picked this goal, now have you got to do it. You know, you got it. You can't quit: you've made it this far. You cannot quit now."

Participant 10, also an IB student, talked about the importance of having family support when taking on a rigorous academic program like IB. He spoke about how his family supported his choice as a ninth grader and continued to support him throughout his high school career. He noted,

> My parents knew from a young age I could have gone here for IB, just knowing that I've always been high achieving in my classwork; it was like, this is the best. This is what we want you to succeed in. And it was kind of like, I was excited for it. But now I'm really just like, I know I can do it. You know, I have my parents to back me on it."

Three participants spoke about a sense of responsibility to succeed in school as role models for their younger siblings. Participant 7, who is the oldest of four boys in his

family, shared his sense of responsibility. “I’m the first son. I have to set a good example for my brothers. Whenever my brothers got home from school, they’d be like, you have to help us with our homework. I realized I have to work myself.” Similarly, Participant 9 said that he noticed that, while his older brothers were not interested in the classes that he is taking in the IB program, his little brother is interested and asks questions about why he works so hard in school. “My youngest brother, he was kind of, he’s always asking me questions. And the more he asked me questions, the more I had to learn because the teacher eventually has to learn.” Participant 9 is hoping that his younger brother will take on the challenge of the IB program when he gets to high school, following his example.

The precedent of academically successful family members was discussed by Participant 5. He reported that he and his older sister had been in school together for so long that they knew exactly how to support each other. He shared that his freshman year, she sat with him to do his homework, insisting that he get that done before he did anything else. They leaned into their individual academic strengths, shoring up each other’s understanding of content and working to stay focused. Participant 1 also talked about the importance of an older sibling or cousin who serves as an example of academic success. He shared, “I’ve seen that my family has done it, like I know… I feel I can, too. Unless I don’t work hard enough. I’m gonna get there, so I keep working harder.”

One participant mentioned that there is a person in his family who serves as a counter-example. He shared that everyone in his family cautions against making a mistake that might cost him a college opportunity. Participant 5 told the story of the mistake: “My uncle, actually, he actually messed up. He got his wife pregnant when he was supposed to go to KU for baseball.” He went on to explain that his uncle did not get

to attend the University of Kansas but got a job to take care of his wife and child instead. He added, “I’ve got to work and study, not make a mistake.”

Finding 4: Positive and Negative Impact of Peers

Participants discussed he importance of peers, both as encouraging and as discouraging factors. Having all different kinds of friends was mentioned eight times by participants, and finding a group of like-minded, academically-focused peers was mentioned nine times. Participant 2 shared that he had peers who do not prioritize school the way that he does. He said that their goal is “Graduate high school, getting Ds and just like the bare minimum to pass high school. Some do go to college, some don’t.” He is focused on taking high school seriously as a preparation for college and beyond, so he is careful not to be influenced by peers who do not have the same academic focus as he does. He explained that he does not listen to outside influences but rather prioritizes the advice of his parents. He explained, “I see where they’re at, and I see where I’m at and where I want to get. I don’t really let people try to change my mind about anything. I don’t really listen to stuff like that.” Participants also discussed feeling like they are different than their peers who do not share their academic focus. Participant 1 indicated that he struggled to understand the priorities of some of his peers. He explained,

> Yeah, it’s not that it’s really not hard either. You know, at least a minimum of 3.0 It’s not hard. I’m serious. I don’t do great on tests, really. I just do every assignment the best. I’m gonna try to get the best return on every assignment I can. And there’s some people who don’t do their best, but I’m feeling like they don’t do anything whatsoever. That always messes them up. I don’t get it.

Participants also discussed the way that they are viewed by staff differently from their peers because of the way that they conduct themselves in school and the way that they prioritize academics. Participant 10 shared that he has never faced any kind of discrimination or bias at school from his teachers as a Black male student. He credits this to his focus on academics, stating, "From middle school on up, I've always been high achieving, so I really haven't had any problems." He went on to add that some of his peers did feel like they are singled out by staff. Participant 10 added, "friends have had some problems with teachers. Friends who are more of the quote-unquote, ghetto type, but I haven't had any [discriminatory experiences]. In their eyes, I seemed like I'm high achieving. I hold myself to a higher standard." Participants also discussed having two different groups of friends: those who focus on academics and those who are not academically focused. Participant 11, an athlete, was talking about the mix of student-athletes on his team. He said that they have both high achieving, academically focused students on the team, like him, but that they also have some young men who do not focus on academics. He stated,

> You know, we do have a few people like that. But at the end of the day, they're my brothers. But I always stay on them even when they're doing bad stuff. And even when they're doing good. No matter what, this is like giving of yourself. You got to show other people your high standards so they know they could be up there, even with you.

Participant 10 talked about a stereotype that high-achieving Black male students face among their non-achieving peers. He talked about the idea of appearing "kept or whitewashed" when Black students work hard to meet the expectations of teachers. He

credits intentional conversations with the Black Student Union leadership team as helping him push back on that stereotype. He indicated that he believes that he has a different point of view from his peers, having had some of these conversations. He explained, “I’m in BSU. I’m an officer. We have talks about things [like this]. I have a very different point of view, so it’s always just how you present yourself. Some people will see you a different way.”

Nine participants talked about prioritizing like-minded peer relationships. Participant 9 explained why most of his friends are other high-achieving Black male students. He believed that “if you follow the wrong crowd, that can downgrade you. If you trying to be like them, then you’ll be like them. Be yourself. When you [aren’t] yourself, how do you expect to be successful in the future?” Participant 1 shared a similar sentiment, noting that many of his friends think like him, prioritizing academic success. He did note that he felt some responsibility to encourage his peers, saying, “I’m not gonna throw out some kids that act like slackers a little bit. I try to encourage them a little bit.” However, he went on to say, “I know what I need to do, and I know how to do it,” so it was easier for him to keep his academic focus. Participant 5 added to the understanding of the role of peers:

> Most of my friends are [high achieving]. I don’t surround myself with people that, you know, that don’t want the best for themselves and me. I feel like having friends or people that don’t have the same vision as you can cause you to decrease as a person. I don’t want nobody else around me to try to pull me down.

Two participants specifically spoke about the importance of an older Black male student role model. Participant 6 talked about a senior student who helped him build winning

debate cases. Participant 10, a student in the IB program, spoke very highly of a student who graduated last year and was now studying at Harvard. He explained,

> I'm friends with someone who goes to Harvard. And it's just all like, it's just very different; I really feel like you're a product of your environment. And if you choose to hang around with people who are going to hold you back, it's going to set you back.

Participant 9 also credited the Catalyst program as a place where he was surrounded by like-minded peers. He gave an example: "The people in Catalyst are very invested in what's going on there. Like if they get to a B, their mind is racing, and they are they're angry trying to get to an A."

Not only did the participants talk about the importance of having role models, but they also discussed the importance of serving as role models themselves. Participant 4 explained what it meant to him:

> There's a lot of Black men or Black students like me; I mean, some of them are failing, or some of them are doing pretty bad. I just feel like I need to be like a leader for my peers or just my fellow Black students. Show what can be done. And to my peers, like my immediate friends, I mean, I try to stay on them, tell them, like this is important. Grades, test scores and stuff like that. So, I hope they see it as I do.

Participant 10 talked about modeling well-roundedness and excellence. He shared a specific story about a Black female student who was a varsity athlete and applying to Ivy League schools. He mentioned the importance of modeling the college application

process for underclassmen, as older students modeled it for him. He explained that it was powerful to see Black people achieving and doing well.

Two participants shared different perspectives. Participant 5 noted that he felt that he served as a behavior role model for other students outside of the classroom. He shared that teachers saw him as a positive example and appreciated that he held others accountable: “I’m very vocal in the hallways; I make sure people are doing the right stuff, too.” Participant 9 shared an interesting perspective about how he saw his role as a student-athlete, stating, “One of the things is that I’m an athlete. So, most people either assume I’m not academically able to process everything or that I won’t have the time. And most people don’t realize how much I prioritize my grades.” He went on to explain that he tried to stand out as an example of an athlete who prioritizes academics.

As role models, participants shared advice that they gave to high achieving Black underclassmen. Four participants shared that they tried to model the importance of staying true to oneself and not following the crowd. Participant 2 talked about the importance of making up his own mind regarding what kind of student he wanted to be and not wavering in his commitment. He shared that he advised underclassmen not to let anyone change their minds about who they are as students. Participant 4 echoed this idea, adding that he encouraged younger students to “separate themselves from their peers” in a positive way. Participant 7 indicated that he passed along advice that he got from one of his coaches: “[He] was like, try to be yourself. Don’t change. You don’t have to change for anybody.” Participant 7 explained that he didn’t really understand this advice when he first started school at MIBHS, but as a senior, it makes more sense. He shared that there are students who make all kinds of different decisions, and there is sometimes pressure

on students to conform or follow the crowd. Participant 10 agreed with this message, adding that he believes it is very important for high-achieving underclassmen not to forget who they are as individuals. He commented,

> I would say keeping your individuality is very important in high school. It's how you set yourself apart from other people is what colleges look at. They look at you as a person, not just an academic weapon. Don't associate yourself with people who are going to get you down or going to hold you back. See, I feel like social awareness is very good for high schoolers and for college - being able to be yourself and also recognize how other people see you.

Participants also shared that they worked to model focus and consistency for their underclassmen peers. Participant 2 shared that he talked to other students about staying focused. He explained that he advised,

> Stay focused. Everybody says it… but a lot of weird things are thrown at you in high school, and it's hard to stay focused. You should work hard towards whatever you want to achieve. If you work hard toward something you want to achieve, it makes it easier to lock into something that you want to do [career]. It will help you out later.

Participant 11 concurred, adding that it is important for underclassmen not to be distracted by negative talk but rather to "Focus on school. Stay locked in on everything." Being present in every situation was the advice that Participant 9 said that he modeled the most for underclassmen students who look to him as a representation of a successful student. He explained that he believes high-achieving students should "Start off right. Get your mind focused. Try to be present in every situation, whether it be your relationships,

your classes, or even just life. Just be present in every single moment." Participant 12 added the concept of consistency to the conversation about how he advised high-achieving underclassmen. In his opinion, the most important trait that he can model for younger students is consistency:

> That's what I see. I mean, a lot of people are gonna say hard work, discipline, and this and that, but what really matters is consistency. You know, showing up day in and day out, day in and day out, day in and day out. But also finding that life balance with your studies and things of that nature.

Finding 5: Academic Self-Confidence/Academic Self-Advocacy

Finding 5 emerged as participants discussed the tools for academic self-confidence and self-advocacy that they bring to their educational journey. These two factors, academic self-confidence and self-advocacy, were discussed as important contributors to the success of participants. "I'm confident in pretty much everything I do, that I can get it done. And then, on top of that, wanting to work. I actually want to work for it and things like that," shared Participant 3. That belief in the innate ability to succeed was also reflected by Participant 1, who talked about the importance of relying on yourself and your academic ability. He said that he reminded himself, "Have a goal, just keep that in mind. Don't, like, let anyone try to change that goal of 4.0. You made that a goal. Don't be stressed. Just do it. Don't overthink it. It's really not that hard." That self-confidence was clear when the participants discussed the way that they approached teachers and advocated for themselves in the classroom.

Participant 9 mentioned that he viewed his teachers as the perfect tools for his success. He shared that when he really needed to learn a concept, he turned to his

teachers. “My teachers are like a perfect outlet. Like, of course, they are human beings, but they are my tools when I really want to learn something.” Participant 1 mentioned that academic self-advocacy is part of the culture of his family. He shared a story about struggling in a physics course and working on learning the material to get his grade back to an A. He shared, “My family [said], go to your teacher and talk to them. I talked to my teacher. We figured out how to work things out, and I got it done. I ended up with 90%, keeping a perfect GPA.” Participant 5 echoed this idea, adding that he advocated for himself because he believed that school and learning are an important part of life, not just something to be endured. He explained,

> Most people just want to graduate and get out of here. But I think school is like, a big part of life. It teaches you a lot and gets you ready for the real world. So, I don’t think everybody, I don’t think they will email the teacher or go talk to him. I think more people should actually start doing that [talking to their teachers].

Participant 11 also talked about the importance of reaching out to teachers as resources when he was struggling in a class. He also talked about the importance of other high-achieving peers as academic resources. He mentioned another high-achieving Black male teammate as a person that he could count on to shore up his understanding in a shared upper-level math course. This peer also encouraged him in his efforts as he tackled this challenging coursework.

Another common theme that emerged as participants discussed the academic tools that they have at their disposal was the idea of a strong work ethic, a serious ability to focus, and a willingness to work to overcome obstacles. Participant 3 talked about taking lessons about work ethic from sports and applying it to the classroom. He specified,

> Like, football is a game of momentum. So, whenever things start getting low, I'm locked in. It's like, are you gonna focus? Try to get this? Like, grind this one out? Grind out whatever you want to do. And that applies in the classroom, too.

Participant 1 added to the conversation about the connection between his work ethic on the field and in the classroom. He talked about when he is in season for sports, he must focus even more on his academics. He shared that, even with 5:00 am practices, his school work comes first, adding, "I don't care how, it's gonna get done." He went on to share a story about a challenging class in which he fought hard for an A throughout the football season. He talked about his commitment, "I knew I was gonna have to get an A in that class somehow or other. Somehow gotta grind it out and get it pulled up."

Participants also mentioned the importance of focus during the school day. Three participants mentioned using music or headphones in the hallways to drown out distractions. Six participants indicated that they generally keep to themselves or are quiet during the school day to stay focused. Participant 2 explained why he uses music to stay focused:

> I like to walk around in the hallways in my head, listening to music because I don't really think there's a need for me to really interact with people in school. I think it's a distraction more than anything. And I think I should just stay focused on what I came here to do. What I need to do.

Four of the six participants who spoke about the importance of focus are athletes and indicated that they do most of their socializing at practice, on the court or field, not in the classroom or hallways.

The ability to face and overcome obstacles is another commonality among participants. Seven participants specifically mentioned common high school tendencies like procrastination, "being lazy," or "slacking" as obstacles that they faced and overcame to be successful. Participant 10 acknowledged that "I mean, I really could set myself back with procrastination," but he worked hard to prevent that from happening. He went on to explain that he could have relied on his parents to hold him accountable, but that would not be effective in the long term. Instead, he indicated, he needed to be responsible for motivating himself. He shared,

> I could ask my parents, and they would help me; they're pretty smart, so they know what they're doing. [Relying on] parents has always been kind of iffy, because once I go off to college, they can't be there. So, it's all just about me really applying myself, like me being able to get this done on time.

Participant 12 added to the understanding of the ways that high-achieving students overcome internal motivation obstacles. He discussed the importance of using self-talk:

> You know, there's like, there's a saying that people say that, you know, it's always gonna be you versus you. So that is my biggest obstacle is getting up every day like thinking to myself: If I just sit here and, you know, do nothing. Sure, I'll feel good in the moment, but I'm obviously going to end up regretting it.

Time management, another common concern among high school students, was mentioned as an obstacle by two participants in particular. Participant 4 discussed the additional pressure that he feels during basketball season. He shared that he had to focus on time management more during the season than when he was out of season. He talked about feeling exhausted and getting home late from games but still focusing on tests and

academic priorities. He credited the coaching staff for helping him find a balance between sports and academics. He indicated that his coaches helped him "stay aligned," offering study halls and opportunities for players to receive additional academic help when needed. Participant 9 also discussed the importance of time management. He commented,

> You have time, but it doesn't mean to play around with the time. It doesn't mean everything has to be business; doesn't mean that you can't have relationships. Doesn't mean you can't have sports. You can have all those things, but you have to learn about time when you are very young and you don't know what you're doing. Things will come with experience.

He went on to discuss the importance of learning about and practicing good time-management skills when students are freshmen and courses are less complex so that the skills will be there when the academic load gets more robust. He also shared that he believed that it is appropriate for students to ask others for help with time management until they feel comfortable. He shared, "It is never wrong to ask a question. You're never stupid to ask a question. The question is worth answering."

Participant 9 also shared a story of personal determination that helped him overcome a serious obstacle his freshman year. He explained,

> One of the biggest obstacles I ever faced was my freshman year. I was just coming out of homelessness. I was homeless for three months, and we had just moved into this new house, and we were just starting up school. So, we were really getting back into the role of what life is. A lot of people, what they took for

> granted, I couldn't really take for granted. I was left with nothing, and I'm just now getting something, so something was so important to me.

He went on to share how he faced academics with a sense of desperation, working quickly and rushing through assignments as though he might lose the opportunity. He said, "It was more of a 'if I don't get it now, I'm going to fail'" instead of being patient with himself as he learned new things. He credited a teacher for pulling him aside and encouraging him to slow down and take the time to learn the material and do his assignments carefully and accurately, being patient with himself. He indicated that he has heeded that advice through all four years of high school.

Summary

Presented in this chapter were the findings of interviews conducted with 12 high-achieving Black male high school students based on interview questions tied directly to the research question for this study. The participants' feedback provided insights into how internal and external factors have contributed to the development of their social, racial, and academic identities. Additionally, these experiences shed light on how these factors influence their perceptions of academic capability. From these responses, five findings emerged based on recurring themes and concepts expressed by the participants. In Chapter 5, a study summary, findings related to the literature, and the conclusions are provided.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

The focus of this study was to examine high-achieving Black male high school students and the external and internal factors that impact their understanding of their social, racial, and academic identities. Chapter 5 builds upon the findings presented in the previous chapter (4), providing interpretations and recommendations. This chapter includes a study summary, findings related to the literature, and the conclusions.

Study Summary

The following sections provide a summary of the study regarding the academic experience of high-achieving Black male high school students. First is an overview of the problem, which provides context to the central issue of the study. Next is a presentation of the study's purpose statement and research question. The next section includes an overview of the research methodology used in the study. The section concludes with the major findings of the study.

Overview of the Problem

While much research has been conducted on the persistent gap in achievement between Black male high school students and their non-Black male counterparts, it is largely deficit-based research (Harper, 2010). According to Johnson (2016), stories of failure and underachievement permeate the literature about Black male students. Little research exists that utilizes an anti-deficit or counter-deficit lens to frame questions about Black male academic achievement. Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework introduced a practice of rephrasing inquiries posed by researchers, shifting the focus away from the failure of Black male students and toward their academic achievements.

At the time the current study was conducted, this framework, which was developed for exploring the experiences of Black male undergraduate students, had not been used to explore the academic experiences of high-achieving Black male high school students.

Purpose Statement and Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the ways that internal and external factors influence the development of the social, racial, and academic identities of Black male high school students and inform perceptions of their academic ability. The study was focused on the experiences of Black male high school students in a diverse semi-suburban school. The researcher hoped to utilize Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework to explore and better understand the unique capital that students bring to their educational experiences. Black male students' perceptions of their academic abilities may come from this capital. This study was guided by the following research question: How do internal and external factors that influence the development of the social, racial, and academic identities of Black male high school students inform their self-perceptions of their academic ability and impact their willingness to embrace academic challenges?

Review of the Methodology

This study was structured with a qualitative phenomenological research design. The researcher constructed open-ended, semi-structured questions that were utilized in the interviews. The setting for the study was MIBHS, a diverse, semi-suburban high school just outside of a major Midwestern metropolitan area. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, criterion sampling was utilized to identify potential participants. The researcher conducted interviews in person, recording and transcribing the interviews

using the Otter transcription software. The transcripts of the interview recordings were shared with each participant for member-checking and data validation. The researcher then analyzed data (member-checked interview transcripts), identifying common themes within the responses. From these themes, the researcher identified five major findings.

Major Findings

The researcher used an open coding process to identify themes aligned with the research question within the individual interviews. The researcher organized individual themes, reviewed them, and consolidated overarching findings that emerged among all participants' responses. In total, five findings emerged from the study.

- Finding 1: Personal goals and a focus on academics as a priority were the most impactful internal factors that determined success.
- Finding 2: School faculty and staff encouragement was the most impactful external support.
- Finding 3: The support of family is key to academic success.
- Finding 4: Peers have both a positive and a negative impact.
- Finding 5: Academic self-confidence and personal tools for academic success and self-advocacy are vital.

Findings Related to the Literature

In 2024, there was little research found that examined the academic experiences of high-achieving Black male high school students. Most of the research regarding Black male academic experiences is centered around failure, drop-out rates, and under-achievement (Johnson, 2016). Information gathered from the National Black College Achievement Study indicates that Black male students bring tools for academic success

to their undergraduate experiences that help support their academic achievement (Harper, 2012). Using Harper's (2010) anti-deficit framework to create interview questions, this study focused on the experiences of high-achieving Black male high school students that inform their perceptions of themselves and their academic ability. The findings of this study are compared to the existing literature presented in Chapter 2.

Finding 1 was related to the importance of personal goals and academic priorities as factors that determine academic success. In their research regarding high-achieving Black high school girls, Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2016) discussed the importance of the intertwining of academic and racial identity and the importance of a "strong sense of self" (p. 212) in the creation and pursuit of academic goals. In the current study, Participant 4 discussed the process of selecting courses for his senior schedule, preferring to choose challenging courses regardless of what his friends might choose, indicating that he knows himself as a student, and he knows that he can "master challenging stuff." Participant 3 talked about how he knows that he will be bored in an on-level course, choosing a challenging course because he knows that academic challenge will "keep him going" and focused. Participant 9 talked about staying true to yourself in the face of obstacles, particularly in the IB program. He said he knows his academic ability, and that IB is "not insurmountable to me," so he stayed committed to that rigorous program.

However, this finding of the current study did not support the concept of academic self-sabotage or academic self-handicapping found in the work of Harris (2018) and Tyler et al. (2016). Harris discussed self-defeating attitudes and behaviors, such as procrastination or unattainable goals, asserting that Black male students may develop a

tendency to expect failure based on the negative experiences they have had in school. In contrast to this, Participant 12 talked about the fact that he sets GPA goals for himself, but more importantly, his goal is to learn as much as he can in high school, indicating a sense of academic purpose beyond just grades. Participant 9 discussed the importance of consistency and focus as he stayed the course in the IB program. Participant 1 shared that his focus on a college scholarship gave him hope and purpose as he navigated academic challenges. Tyler et al.'s (2016) findings indicated that Black male students internalize racist stereotypes, which may result in lower psychological engagement in school. However, Participants 10 and 12 talked about education as a journey. Participant 12 shared, "it's about seeing purpose" in what you do. Working toward the goal of post-secondary education but learning as much as possible along the way was the sentiment shared by these two participants.

Finding 2 in the current study explained how school faculty and staff encouragement was the most impactful external factor that determined success. Participants mentioned AVID, Catalyst, and athletic programs specifically. Participants also mentioned the importance of staff members of color as resources and mentors. McCaig (2020) discussed the importance of communication between teachers and their students, noting that teachers who express belief in the academic ability of their students have a positive impact on goal setting. Similarly, in the current study, Participant 10 talked about how the expectations of his IB teachers kept him in the program when it was challenging, and Participant 11 discussed how a teacher who believed in him convinced him to take a more challenging, honors-level science course. Chambers (2009) discussed the role of important factors such as "caring and well-trained teachers" (p. 427), quality

educational resources, and policies that promote social justice, level the playing field for students, and promote student success. Eight participants mentioned AVID, Catalyst, and athletics as programs with trained staff members that encouraged their academic priorities. Participants 1 and 2 shared that AVID helped them set GPA goals and choose academically challenging courses to get them ready for college. Participant 8 explained that his AVID teacher and peers were accountability partners, holding him to a high academic standard. Participants 4 and 7 discussed the ways that their coaches had high expectations of them in the classroom as well as on the field.

Graves (2014) discussed the importance of Black educators in the racial identity development of Black high school students. In the current study, Participants 4 and 10 talked about looking up to Black teachers, coaches, and administrators as role models. Participant 11 shared that he has set his sights on being like his high school principal, a high-achieving Black man. Gaither (2015) talked about the role that Black educators play, holding students to high academic expectations while also serving as a coach and role model "through real-world experiences" (p. 152). Participant 4 shared a real-world example set by his coach and explained that it helped him stay focused and motivated. Participant 3 said that he "connects with them [Black teachers and coaches]" in a way that he would not be able to with a White coach.

Waire-Harlan (2022) wrote about the value of Black students engaging with "student-centered administrators" (p. 136) and feeling heard and valued in the eyes of school administration. In the current study, several participants noted Black school administrators as role models, both academically and socially. Participant 4 said he sees himself reflected in the Black male administrators in the building, and Participant 3

talked about Black male leadership in the building “getting us right, you know?” and explaining that those men talked to him about everything from wearing a tie on game days to hallway behavior and classroom expectations.

The current study’s findings did not support the theme of low expectations from educational professionals discussed by Rodríguez and Greer (2017). In their study, Rodríguez and Greer (2017) posited that teacher expectations for Black students were focused on compliance and not comprehension. In contrast, Participants 7 and 9 shared experiences about a staff member who held them to high expectations. Participant 9 spoke about a teacher who encouraged him to slow down and focus on mastering the material instead of rushing. Participants 1 and 2 talked about how their AVID teachers held them accountable academically and taught them skills to succeed in challenging coursework. Participant 9 stated that his IB teachers and Catalyst sponsor encouraged him to stay the course in the IB program when the coursework became challenging his senior year.

Finding 3 in this study highlights the importance of family support and encouragement. The importance of family support in mitigating academic stress and encouraging self-efficacy, particularly among Black students, was documented by Robinson et al. (2023). In the current study, Participant 2 shared that his focus on academics comes from his parents. He indicated that he puts academics first because they also make school a priority and help him stay focused. Participants 9 and 10 explained the influence of their parents to choose IB and their encouragement to persevere through the challenging curriculum.

Yosso (2005) discussed the various types of capital that might not be traditionally recognized by educators, including familial capital. Familial capital was evident in the current study as an asset to participants. Participants 1, 5 and 12 talked about older siblings or cousins who were college students or recent college graduates. The participants credited these family members as role models, encouraging and supporting them as they work toward their post-secondary goals. Participant 1 discussed the power of a family precedent, stating, "I've seen that my family has done it…I feel I can, too." Participants 7 and 12 discussed their desire to honor the sacrifice of their hard-working parents by working hard academically and earning a college degree.

Carpenter (2019) noted the importance of family capital, both serving as good educational examples for these students and serving as examples of what not to do. In the current study, Participants 7 and 9 indicated additional responsibility to serve as a role model for their younger siblings, noting that they "have to set a good example" as the oldest in the family. Carpenter (2019) noted that family examples include "all learned lessons," not just those "deemed virtuous" (p. 103). In the current study, Participant 5 talked about a family member who made a mistake and forfeited an opportunity for a college scholarship. That counter-example serves as a motivator for Participant 5 to stay on track and focus on school, stating: "I got to work and study, not make a mistake."

Finding 4 was centered on the influence of peers, both positive and negative, on the academic experiences of high-achieving Black male students. Horvat and Lewis (2003) recognized the importance of a diverse group of Black friends, noting that the diversity within Black peer groups can provide Black students with additional resources to support their academic aspirations. In the current study, Participant 1 talked about

finding value in having all kinds of friends. He shared that he did not make the same academic decisions as they did but that he tries to encourage "the slackers" a little bit. Participant 11 echoed this, sharing that he has all kinds of friends on his team, and he values them for who they are and tries to show them his "high standards," leading by example.

On the other hand, Horvat and Lewis (2003) also found that participants in their study cultivated relationships with other academically successful peers in their schools. Similarly, the findings of the current study indicate that most participants surrounded themselves with other high-achieving Black students. Participants 5 and 9 shared that they understood the importance of peers in achieving academic success. They talked about surrounding themselves with peers who shared their vision for academic success in high school and achieving their post-secondary goals. Participants 5 and 10 shared that they are careful not to surround themselves with anyone who might pull them down or distract them from their goals. Participant 4 explained the importance of "separating yourself from your peers" in a positive way.

Harper and Quaye (2007) found that Black male students who participate in a student leadership organization found like-minded peers, accountability, encouragement, and mentorship. The findings of the current study support this, the researcher noting the important role of AVID, Catalyst and IB as organizations within the school that support the academic success of students. Participants 9 and 10 credited the mentorship of older Black students in the IB program for serving as examples and paving the way for their success. Participants 1 and 2 credit AVID for giving them the organization and study tools that they need for academic success and for holding them accountable for academic

performance. Participants 1 and 12 mentioned that AVID helped them navigate the college scholarship application process. Participant 9 credited his like-minded Catalyst peers for holding him to an exceptionally high standard and encouraging him to remain in the IB program, and Participant 10 noted that other IB students were the ones who inspired him to work toward his academic goals.

Participants in the current study talked about the acting White stereotype, which was discussed by Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2016). While the researchers indicated that Black male students had to make social sacrifices to focus on their studies and academic goals, the current study found that this stereotype did not have a negative impact on participants. Participant 10 talked about the idea of appearing "kept or whitewashed," a stereotype that high-achieving Black male students face among their non-achieving peers. He discussed the intentional way that his BSU leadership team has worked to counteract this concept and explained that, in his experience, these conversations have changed some of the perceptions of students, mitigating the impact of this stereotype.

Finding 5 focused on the importance of academic self-confidence and personal tools for academic success and self-advocacy for high-achieving Black male high school students. Yosso (2005) discussed the power of "aspirational confidence" (p. 80), which is often overlooked as a source of capital for students. In the current study, Participants 3 and 5 indicated that they believed in their innate academic ability, and they were confident that they could reach their academic goals. This confidence was reflected by Participants 1 and 11, who indicated that they are comfortable advocating for themselves with their teachers. Participant 1 noted that it was "just natural" for him to talk with

teachers about his grades because they are important to him. Yosso (2005) also discussed the importance of "navigational confidence" (p. 80), or the ability to face and overcome obstacles. The findings of the current study support this, with several participants mentioning the tools that they used to overcome potential obstacles to academic success. Participant 12 discussed the power of self-talk to prevent procrastination and hold himself accountable, stating in the end, "It is you versus you." Participant 9 shared about a teacher helping him work through a feeling of academic desperation that developed after a period of homelessness.

Harper (2008) discussed the importance of Black student involvement in academic and leadership opportunities. He notes that leadership can cause positive interactions with faculty and staff, which impacts student perception of their ability. The potential importance of student involvement was supported by the current study, which noted the transfer of lessons learned in athletics to the classroom. Participants 1 and 3 discussed the values of perseverance and determination that they learned in athletic endeavors and the way that those concepts apply to the classroom. They talked about how they learned to "lock in" on what is important when they have a task or assignment.

Conclusions

This section provides conclusions drawn from this study regarding internal and external factors that influence the participant's academic experiences as high-achieving Black male high school students. This section includes the implications for action and the recommendations for future research. This section closes with concluding remarks regarding the study.

Implications for Action

According to Johnson (2016), the dominant literature regarding Black male student achievement includes stories of failure and underachievement. Harper's (2010) anti-deficit achievement framework introduced a practice of rephrasing inquiries posed by researchers, shifting the focus away from the failure of Black male students and toward their academic achievements. Utilizing an anti-deficit lens, the researcher in this study summarizes the experiences of high-achieving Black male high school students and has implications for increasing student achievement, student efficacy, and a sense of belonging and future-readiness among this demographic.

First, school districts should work to recruit and retain staff of color, particularly Black men, who serve as a unique connection point for high-achieving Black male students. The value of Black professionals in leadership positions, such as school administration and head coaching positions, to serve as examples and role models for students must be acknowledged. School districts can utilize grow-your-own teacher programs to support aspiring teachers of color, both financially and academically, and incentivize them to return to the district to teach after college graduation. A district para-to-professional plan can help move coaches and other paraprofessionals into roles as teachers, increasing their student impact. Intentionality is key here, as districts recruit from teacher education programs that are part of area Historically Black Colleges and Universities and meet with minority professional organizations such as the National Association of Black School Educators to find teacher candidates who are representative of the demographic face of the school and district. Partner organizations such as *Teachers Like Me* are actively working within districts to support new educators with culturally

responsive instructional pedagogy while actively removing barriers and investing in the needs of new teachers of color.

Second, school districts should invest in college-readiness programming like AVID, which is designed to support the academic achievement of traditionally underrepresented students. Specifically designed to demystify the college-going process for first-generation families and build tools for academic success for students, these programs foster a sense of comradery among students, providing accountability and support among like-minded peers. AVID, TRIO, Upward Bound, and other academic programs can help remove barriers, opening doors for students who are traditionally underrepresented on college campuses.

Third, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging professional development for school staff should include conversations about the internal and external factors that traditionally underrepresented students bring to their educational experiences. These factors, discussed by Yosso (2015) and Carpenter (2019), may not be recognized by dominant culture teachers as assets. Groups of education and business professionals must provide ongoing training and support as school districts tackle the important work of educating staff about the strength that comes with a diversity of experiences. Education regarding the value of aspirational capital, familial capital, and other examples of cultural capital could help staff see value in what their students bring to the classroom.

Finally, the power of peer influence and positive role models must not be underestimated. Schools should tap into the importance and value of mentorship between students of color and successful graduates and college students who represent a diversity of experiences. Intentional activities such as post-secondary alumni panels and lunch

visits with current college students who are examples of high-achieving Black men can be motivational and help students see their potential. Schools should be intentional about inviting guest speakers who are successful men of color, showcasing excellence in many disciplines and providing an example of possibility for all students.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways that internal and external factors influenced the development of the social, racial, and academic identities of Black male high school students and inform perceptions of their academic ability. The study took place at MIBHS, the most diverse school in the state, so students had very little experience with discrimination or systemic barriers to their academic success. A study comparing the experiences of these students to students enrolled in similar schools with a less diverse demographic would be interesting and may reveal more instances of tokenism or racism. A similar study conducted in an urban school with a majority minority student population would add an interesting perspective to the conversation. Two of the students in the current study were transfer students from a college prep public charter in a neighboring urban school district. The school is staffed by primarily Black staff members and is a college preparatory magnet school for high-achieving urban students. Replicating this study in a charter school environment would add to our understanding of the impact of cultural capital, as well as the impact of Black educators on student achievement.

Additionally, this research was designed to explore the experiences of only high-achieving Black male students. Widening the sample to include all Black male junior and senior students or interviewing both high achieving Black male and Black female

students could expand the current understanding. Finally, adding a quantitative component to the study comparing objective academic measures like test scores and GPA to academic perception data among high-achieving students could help uncover systemic barriers to success such as inflated grades or gatekeeping.

Concluding Remarks

The results of this study provided additional insight into an area where little research currently exists in 2024: the academic and social experiences of high-achieving Black male high school students. Identifying common internal and external factors that influence this study's participants and their perception of their academic ability contributes to the collective body of knowledge surrounding Black male academic achievement. Understanding these factors has implications for Black male students as they access post-secondary opportunities, as well as educators, as educators work to close the achievement and opportunity gap for Black male students. The findings from this study provide opportunities for future research and insight into how educators, educational systems, and school districts can improve their practices to create inclusive and successful environments for all.

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Appendices

Appendix A. District Approval

Request to Conduct Research with the [redacted] School District

Please read and follow the directions in this document.

A copy of this form must be returned to [redacted] Director of Data and Accountability with the necessary signatures BEFORE approval can be granted to conduct research. Please include your last name as you save your document e.g. Shanks- Research Request.

Name of Applicant: Carrie E. Marcantonio
Employee of [redacted] Schools? Yes☐ No ☒
If YES, location of building and your position with the [redacted] School District
Is the research in fulfillment of a graduate program requirement and/or in partnership with an external organization? Yes ☒ No ☐
If YES, what is the name of external organization and lead contact person?
External Organization: Baker University
Lead Contact Person and Position. Dr.
Susan Rogers, Dissertation Advisor

Briefly describe the purpose of the research:

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the ways that positive internal and external factors, or capital, influence the development of social, racial, and academic identities of Black male high school students in a diverse but predominantly White semi- suburban school. The researcher hopes to explore and better understand the unique cultural capital that students bring to their educational experiences that works to inform Black male student perceptions of his academic ability. While negative factors, such as stereotype threat, tokenism, and academic self-handicapping may impact a Black male high school student's perception of his academic ability, the focus of this study is to explore the supportive internal and external factors, such as cultural capital and communities of support that serve to mitigate those negative factors.

Submission Requirements – please mark check boxes as appropriate

1. A copy of the complete application submitted for formal approval by a human subjects review board. This application should include, at a minimum:
   a. A brief summary of the purpose and scope of the research including:
   ☒ The extent to which the research addresses and/or aligns with the goals of the school district
   ☒ Potential benefit of the research to positively impact district, building, or classroom practice
   b. A brief summary of the research methods including:
   ☒ Participants
   ☒ Selection process
   ☐ Remuneration procedures (if applicable)
   ☒ Assurance of confidentiality of participant identification
   ☒ Consent and assent procedures and documents
   ☒ Activities related to the research, including proposed survey, interview, and/or

questions/instruments

☒ Extent of intrusiveness/disruption regarding classroom instruction

☒ Time/effort requirements of participants

2. ☒ Evidence that the proposed research has been formally approved through a review board for protection of human subjects.
3. ☒ Assurance from the researcher that building principals, teachers, students and/or their parents may opt out of participation without consequence even with approval by the district team.
4. **Signature of Principal(s)** of building(s) impacted by research study before approval.

I emailed [redacted], new principal at [redacted], to let him know that this will occur next SY. If you are going to start collecting data in May, let [redacted] know.

Signature of Principal(s) of building(s) impacted by research study before approval.

Signature of Director of Data and Accountability: [redacted]

Team Review Date: May 4, 2023 Approved: X Not Approved: ____

Appendix B. Baker IRB Approval

Baker University Institutional Review Board

May 17th, 2023

Dear Carrie Marcantonio and Susan Rogers,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.
6. If this project is not completed within a year, you must renew IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,

Nathan Poell, MLS
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Tim Buzzell, PhD
Nick Harris, MS
Scott Kimball, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD

Appendix C. Parent Communication and Consent Forms for Students Under 18 Years of Age

Guardian Letter - English

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

Your student has been selected to participate in a study regarding the experiences of Black male high school students in a diverse high school setting. This study is part of a doctoral dissertation and aims to explore the factors that influence the way Black male high school students see themselves, both academically and socially. The purpose of the study is to explore how internal and external factors influence the way that Black male high school students see themselves, academically and socially, in the context of a diverse high school like [redacted] High School. The research is designed to explore the strengths these young men bring to their academic experiences so that educators can help other students find their strengths.

Be assured that the privacy and confidentiality of your child will be maintained throughout this study. No identifying information will be shared or published, and your child's participation is completely voluntary. Ultimately, this research will be part of a doctoral dissertation. Please see the attached consent form for more details.

If you have any further questions about the study, feel free to contact me, Carrie Marcantonio at CarrieEMarcantonio@stu.bakeru.edu or by telephone at 816-668-0303. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant the investigator has not answered, you may contact my major advisor, Dr. Susan Rogers (srogers@bakeru.edu or 785-230-2801).

Sincerely,

Carrie E. Marcantonio
Doctoral Candidate, Baker University
CarrieEMarcantonio@stu.baker.edu
Mobile. 816-668-0303

Parental Consent to Participate

Study Title: Exploring the Academic Identity Development of Black Male High School Students
Researcher: Carrie E. Marcantonio

Student Name:_____

Introduction

- Your child is being asked to participate in a research study regarding the experiences of Black male high school students in a diverse high school setting as part of a doctoral dissertation.
- He was selected as a possible participant because a counselor, teacher or administrator recommended him for the study. He met the criteria for the study, which includes:
    - The student must be Black, African, or multi-racial/Black male student, as determined by the demographic information in Power School.
    - The student must have earned a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 or above.
    - The student must be recommended by a counselor, teacher, or administrator. Recommended students must meet one of the following criteria listed below:
        - The student demonstrates leadership potential.
        - The student participates in AVID or Catalyst college readiness program.
        - The student is enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Early College Academy (ECA) or Dual-Credit course.
        - The student is actively engaged in school activities, arts, or athletics.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before allowing your child to participate in this study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is to explore how internal and external factors influence the way that young Black high school students see themselves, academically and socially, in the context of a diverse high school. The research is designed to explore the strengths these young men bring to their academic experiences so that educators can help other students find their strengths.
- Ultimately, this research will be part of a doctoral dissertation, presented and defended in front of a doctoral committee and published.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you decide to allow your child to participate in this study, he will be asked to do the following things:
  - Participate in a 30-45 minute interview with the researcher, which will be recorded and transcribed.
  - Check transcribed interview to be sure that the transcription accurately reflects what the participant wanted to share.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- There are no reasonable, foreseeable (or expected) risks.

Benefits of Being in the Study

- There are no expected benefits to the students choosing to participate in this study.

Confidentiality

- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all recordings and electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file. The researcher will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify your child.
- Information about your child's responses will be published under a pseudonym (a fictitious name). However, you will be given the opportunity to review and approve any material that is published prior to publication.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you and your child. Your child may refuse to participate in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with the investigators of this study or [redacted] Schools. Your child has the right not to answer any single question and withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of the interview material.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, feel free to contact me, Carrie Marcantonio at CarrieEMarcantonio@stu.bakeru.edu or by telephone at 816-668-0303. If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant the investigator has not answered, you may contact my major advisor, Dr. Susan Rogers (srogers@bakeru.edu or 785-230-2801).

- If you have any problems or concerns resulting from your child's participation, you can report them to Dr. Rogers (see contact information above).

Guardian Letter - Somali

Waalid (s) / Ilaaliyaha (s):

Ardaygaaga waxaa loo xushay inuu kaqeybqaato daraasad ku saabsan khibradaha ardayda dugsiga sare ee ragga madow ee ku yaal goob dugsi sare oo kaladuwan. Daraasadani waa qayb ka mid ah kala-qaybsanaanta doctoral-ka waxayna ujeedadeedu tahay inay sahmiso qodobbada saameeya sida ardayda dugsiga sare ee ragga ah ay isu arkaan, xagga tacliinta iyo bulshada labadaba. Ujeedada daraasadda ayaa ah in la sahamiyo sida arrimaha gudaha iyo dibedda ay u saameeyaan sida ardayda dugsiga sare ee ragga madow ay isu arkaan, aqoon ahaan iyo bulsho ahaan labadaba, macnaha guud ee dugsi sare oo kaladuwan sida Dugsiga Sare ee Waqooyiga [redacted]. Cilmi baarista waxaa loogu talagalay in lagu sahamiyo awoodaha ay raggaan dhalinyarada ahi u leeyiihiin waaya-aragnimadooda waxbarasho si ay barayaashu uga caawiyaan ardayda kale inay helaan awoodooda.

Hubso in asturnaanta iyo qarsoodiga cunuggaaga lagu hayn doono daraasaddan oo dhan. Ma jiro macluumaad tilmaamaya oo la wadaagi doono ama la daabici doono, ka-qeybgalka ilmahaaguna gabi ahaanba waa ikhtiyaari. Ugu dambeyntiina, cilmi baaristaani waxay qayb ka noqon doontaa soo bandhiggayga si aan u helo shahaadada doctoral ka. Fadlan eeg foomka oggolaanshaha ee ku lifaaqan faahfaahin dheeraad ah.

Haddii aad qabtid wax su'aalo ah oo dheeri ah oo ku saabsan daraasadda, xor baad utahay inaad ila soo xiriirto, Carrie Marcantonio oo ku taal CarrieEMarcantonio@stu.bakeru.edu ama taleefanka 816-668-0303. Haddii aad qabtid wax walaac ah oo kale oo ku saabsan xuquuqdaada sida cilmi baaris kaqeybgale aye baaraha uusan ka jawaabin, waxaad la xiriiri kartaa la-taliyeheyga weyn, Dr. Susan Rogers (srogers@bakeru.edu ama 785-230-2801).

Daacadnimo,

Guardian Consent Form – Somali

Oggolaanshaha Waalidka ee

Kaqeybgalka

Cinwaanka Daraasadda: Sahaminta Kobcinta Aqoonsiga Tacliinta ee Dugsiga Sare ee Madoow
Ardayda
Baaraha: Carrie E. Marcantonio

Magaca ardayga:

Hordhac

- Ilmahaaga waxaa laga codsanayaa inuu ka qeybqaato daraasad cilmi baaris ah oo ku saabsan khibradaha ardayda dugsiga sare ee labka ah ee dugsiga sare ee kala duwan taas oo qayb ka ah kala-guurka doctoral.
- Waxaa loo xushay inuu noqdo kaqeybgale macquul ah maxaa yeelay lataliye, macalin ama maamule ayaa kula taliyay daraasadda. Wuxuu buuxiyay shuruudaha daraasadda, oo ay ku jiraan:
    - Ardaygu waa inuu noqdaa Madow, Afrikaan, ama arday badan oo jinsi / madow ah, sida lagu go'aamiyay macluumaadka tirakoobka ee Power School.
    - Ardaygu waa inuu kasbaday isku-darka Isugeynta Heerka Fasalka (GPA) ee 3.0 ama wixii ka sareeya.
    - Ardaygu waa inuu ku taliyaa la-taliye, macallin, ama maamule. Ardayda lagu taliyay waa inay buuxiyaan mid ka mid ah shuruudaha soo socda ee hoos ku taxan:
        - Ardaygu wuxuu muujiyaa awooda hogaaminta.
        - Ardaygu wuxuu ka qaybqaataa barnaamijka AVID ama barnaamijka u diyaarsanaanta kulleejada Catalyst.
        - Ardaygu wuxuu ku qoran yahay Meel Sare (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Akadeemiyadda Kulliyadda Hore (ECA) ama koorsada amaahda.
        - Ardaygu wuxuu si firfircoon ugu hawlan yahay howlaha dugsiga, farshaxanka, ama ciyaaraha fudud.
- Waxaan kaa codsaneynaa inaad aqriso foomkan oo aad weydiiso wax su'aalo ah oo aad qabtid ka hor intaadan u oggolaan cunuggaaga inuu ka qeybqaato daraasaddan.

Ujeedada Daraasadda

- Ujeedada daraasadda ayaa ah in la sahamiyo sida arrimaha gudaha iyo dibedda ay saameyn ugu yeeshaan sida ardayda da'da yar ee dugsiga sare ee

madow ay isu arkaan, aqoon ahaan iyo bulsho ahaanba, macnaha guud ee dugsi sare oo kala duwan. Cilmi baarista waxaa loogu talagalay in lagu sahamiyo awooda ay raggaan dhalinyarada ahi u keenaan khibradooda waxbarasho si ay barayaashu uga caawiyaan ardayda kale inay helaan awoodooda.

- Ugu dambeyntiina, cilmi-baaristaani waxay qayb ka noqon doontaa kala-qaybsanaanta doctoral, oo lagu soo bandhigo laguna difaaco horteeda guddiga doctoral-ka oo la daabaco.

Sharraxaadda Nidaamyada Daraasadda

- Haddii aad go'aansato inaad u oggolaato cunuggaaga inuu ka qeybqaato daraasaddan, waxaa la weydiisan doonaa inuu sameeyo waxyaabaha soo socda:
    - Kaqeybgal wareysi uu doobayo cilmi baare 30-45 daqiiqo.
    - Hubi wareysiga la qorey si aad u hubiso in qoraalka si sax ah u muujinayo waxa kaqeybgale ayaa doonayey inuu la wadaago.

Khataraha / Dhibaatooyinka Ku Noqoshada Daraasaddan

- Ma jiraan wax macquul ah, oo la arki karo (ama la filayo khataraha).

Faa'iidooyinka In lagu jiro Daraasadda

- Ma jiraan wax faa iido ah oo laga filayo ardayda dooranaya inay ka qeybgalaan daraasaddan.

Kalsoonida

- Diiwaanada daraasaddan ayaa si adag loogu hayn doonaa si qarsoodi ah. Diiwaanada cilmi baarista waxaa lagu hayn doonaa feyl xiran, dhammaan duubista iyo macluumaadka elektiroonigga ah waa la duubi doonaa oo lagu hubin doonaa iyadoo la adeegsanayo faylka sirta ah ee la ilaaliyo. Baaraha kuma dari doono wax macluumaad ah warbixin kasta oo aan soo daabici karno taas oo suurta gal ka dhigaysa in la aqoonsado cunuggaaga.
- Macluumaadka ku saabsan jawaabaha cunuggaaga waxaa lagu daabici doonaa magac been abuur ah (magac khiyaali ah). Si kastaba ha noqotee, waxaa lagu siin doonaa fursad aad dib ugu eegto oo aad ku ansixiso wax kasta oo la daabacay ka hor intaan la daabicin.

Xuquuqda Diidmada ama La Bixitaanka

- Go'aanka kaqeybgalka daraasaddan ayaa gabi ahaanba adiga iyo cunuggaaga ah. Ilmahaagu wuu diidi karaa inuu ka qeybqaato daraasadda waqti kasta adigoon saameyn ku yeelan xiriirka aad la leedahay baarayaasha daraasaddan ama Iskuullada Waqooyiga Kansas. Ilmahaagu wuxuu xaq u leeyahay inuusan ka jawaabin hal su'aal oo uu gebi ahaanba ka baxo wareysiga waqti kasta inta lagu gudajiro hawsha; intaa waxaa dheer, waxaad xaq u leedahay inaad codsato in wareystaha uusan isticmaalin mid ka mid ah qalabka wareysiga.

Xuquuqda aad u leedahay Weydiiso Su'aalaha iyo Warbixinta Welwelka

- Waxaad xaq u leedahay inaad weydiiso su'aalo ku saabsan daraasadan cilmi baarista iyo inaad su'aalahaas iga jawaabtaan ka hor, inta lagu gudajiro ama

ka dib cilmi baarista. Haddii aad qabtid wax su'aalo dheeri ah oo ku saabsan daraasadda, xor u noqo inaad ila soo xiriirto, Carrie Marcantonio oo ku taal CarrieEmarcantonio@stu.bakeru.edu ama taleefanka 816-668-0303. Haddii aad jeceshahay, soo koobid natiijooyinka daraasadda ayaa laguu soo diri doonaa. Haddii aad qabtid wax walaac ah oo kale oo ku saabsan xuquuqdaada sida kaqeybgale cilmi baaris ah baaraha kama jawaabin, waxaad la xiriiri kartaa la-taliyeheyga weyn, Dr. Susan Rogers (kobcinta@bakeru.edu ama 785-230- 2801).

- Haddii aad qabtid wax dhibaato ah ama walaac ah oo ka dhashay ka qeybgalka cunuggaaga, waxaad u sheegi kartaa Dr. Rogers (eeg macluumaadka xiriirka ee kor ku xusan).

Oggolaanshaha

- Saxiixaaga hoose wuxuu muujinayaa inaad go'aansatay inaad u ogolaato cunuggaaga inuu ka qeybqaato daraasaddan oo uu akhriyo oo fahmay macluumaadka kor lagu soo sheegay. Waxaa lagu siin doonaa nuqul saxeexan oo taariikh leh oo foomkan ah si aad u ilaaliso, oo ay la socdaan agab kasta oo kale oo daabacan oo loo arko inay lagama maarmaan u yihiin baarayaasha daraasadda.

Magaca ardayga: _____.
Waxaan si buuxda u fahmay oo si cad u qaadanayaa halista ku jirta hawshan. Waxaan halkan ku siidaayaa oo aan hayaa Iskuulada Magaalada Waqooyiga Kansas iyo shaqaalaheeda oo aan dhib ku qabin wax kasta iyo dhammaan waajibaadka, ficilada, iyo waxyeelada.

Magaca waalidka /
Martida: (daabacan) _____

Saxeexa waalidka /
ilaaliyaha: Taariikh:

_____

Guardian Communication - Arabic

الساده اولياء الامور الكرام
تم اختيار الطالب الخاص للمشاركه في دراسة تتعلق بتجارب Black male high school students. هذه الدراسه جزء من أطروحة دكتوراه وتهدف الى استكشاف العوامل التي تؤثر على الطريقة التي يرى بها Black male high school students أكاديميا واجتماعيا. الغرض من الدراسة هو اكتشاف كيفية تأثير العوامل الداخلية والخارجية على الطريقه التي يرى بها الطلاب أنفسهم اكاديميا واجتماعيا مثل [redacted] .تم تصميم البحث لاكتشاف نقاط القوه التي يجلبها هولاء الشباب لخبراتهم الأكاديمية حتى يتمكن المعلمون من مساعدة الطلاب الأخرين في العثور على نقاط قوتهم.

تأكد من الحفاظ على خصوصية وسرية طفلك خلال هذه الدراسه.
لن يتم مشاركة اي معلومات تعريفيه اونشرها ،وتكون مشاركة طفلك طوعيه تماماً.
في النهايه ،سيكون هذا البحث جزءا من أطروحة الدكتوره.
يرجى الاطلاع على نموذج الموافقه المرفق لمزيد من التفاصيل.

اذا كان لديك اي اسئله اخوي قم بالاتصال ب كاري ماركانتونيو علي الايميل الاتي (CarrieEMarcantonio@stu.bakeru.edu) او عبر الهاتف علي الرقم (8166680303). وإذا كانت لديك أي مخاوف أخرى بشأن حقوقك أنت مشارك في البحث ولم يرد المحقق على إجاباتها ف يمكنك)الاتصال بمستشارتي الرئيسية الدكتوره سوزان ز (srogers@bakeru.edu) او برقم الهاتف (7852302801)

او باخلاص ،كاري إي ماركانتونيو
مرشح لنيل درجة الدكتوراه من جامعه بيكر
CarrieEMarcantonio@stu.baker.edu
هاتف متحرك (8166680303)

Appendix D: Student Communication and Consent Forms for Students 18 Years of Age or Over

Dear [redacted],

Congratulations! Because of your GPA and involvement at [redacted], you have been selected to participate in a study regarding the experiences of Black male high school students in a diverse high school setting. The purpose of the study is to explore how internal and external factors influence the way that Black male high school students see themselves, academically and socially, in the context of a diverse high school like [redacted] High School. The research is designed to explore the strengths young men like you bring to your academic experiences so that educators can help other students find their strengths.

Your privacy and confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study. No identifying information will be shared or published, and your participation is completely voluntary. Please see the attached consent form for more details. If you have any further questions about the study, feel free to contact me, Carrie Marcantonio at CarrieEMarcantonio@stu.bakeru.edu or by telephone at 816-668-0303. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant the investigator has not answered, you may contact my major advisor, Dr. Susan Rogers (srogers@bakeru.edu or 785-230-2801).

Sincerely,

Carrie E. Marcantonio
Doctoral Candidate, Baker University
CarrieEMarcantonio@stu.baker.edu
Mobile. 816-668-0303

Participant Consent to Participate
(For participants 18 years of age and older)

Study Title: Exploring the Academic Identity Development of Black Male High School Students
Researcher: Carrie E. Marcantonio

Participant
Name:_____

Introduction
You are being asked to participate in a research study regarding the experiences of Black male high school students in a diverse high school setting. You have been recommended for this study because you are a Black male who meets some of the study criteria, which include:

- GPA requirements
- Demonstrated leadership potential
- Advanced Placement or Dual Credit courses
- Participation in AVID, Early College Academy, or Catalyst at NKCHS

Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

Purpose of Study
- The purpose of the study is to explore how both internal and external factors influence the way that young Black high school students see themselves, academically and socially, in the context of a diverse high school. The research is designed to explore the strengths these young men bring to their academic experiences so that educators can help other students find their strengths.
- Ultimately, this research will be part of a doctoral dissertation, presented and defended in front of a doctoral committee and published.

Description of the Study Procedures
- If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:
  - Participate in a 30-45 minute interview with the researcher, which will be recorded and transcribed.
  - Check transcription to be sure that it accurately reflects what you wanted to share.

Confidentiality
- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file. The researcher will not include any information in any published report that would make it possible to identify you.
- Information that you share will be published under a pseudonym (false name). However, you will be given the opportunity to review and approve any material before it is published.

Payments/Benefits to Participants

- There are no expected benefits to the students choosing to participate in this study.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to participate in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with the investigators of this study or [redacted] Schools. You have the right not to answer any single question and withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process. Additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of the interview transcript.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during, or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, feel free to contact me, Carrie Marcantonio at CarrieEMarcantonio@stu.bakeru.edu or by telephone at 816-668-0303. If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant that the investigator has not answered you may contact my major advisor, Dr. Susan Rogers (srogers@bakeru.edu or 785-230-2801).

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to participate as a research subject for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

I, _____, agree to participate in the EDD research study described above. I fully understand and expressly assume the risks involved in this activity. I hereby release and hold [redacted] Schools and its employees harmless from any and all liabilities, actions, and damages.

Participant Name:
(Print) _____

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____