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The Importance Of Leadership Activities In Addressing The Shortage Of African American Men Completing Doctoral Degrees

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Doctoral Dissertation Research

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

National Louis University

College of Professional Studies and Advancement

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Organizational Leadership

By

Lerita Nefertiti Watkins

April 2020

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Abstract

The focus in this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the experiences of African American men who obtained a doctoral degree and the role of leadership in their success. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 African American men from across the United States. The research develops an understanding of patterns of leadership within institutions of higher education from an African American male perspective. Elements of the critical race theory served as the basis for the conceptual framework. The significant statements made by the 10 African American men reflected their distinct perceptions of the role leadership plays in African American men's pursuit of their doctoral degree. Their articulation of the direct exploration, analysis, and description of the phenomenon allowed five themes to surface: (a) impact of self-established cohorts, (b) impact of mentors and the military, (c) impact of family, (d) impact of spirituality, and (e) impact of a lack of leadership. The results of this study support that there is a grave lack of African American male presence within leadership of higher education institutions and no relatable activities are being implemented or developed to meet the needs of African American men. Conclusively, the researcher suggests future research into the experiences and perspectives of African American men to broaden the conversation surrounding how leadership can help level the playing field for this population at institutions of higher education.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to God, and I am grateful for his enduring for me. I thank God for providing me with the provision of strength and courage to take this journey. Even when I did not have the confidence in myself to persevere, God helped me to keep believing and to keep moving forward. This dissertation is dedicated to every little cousin, niece, and nephew, as well as my brothers. I want all of you to know that the sky is the limit, so continue believing in yourself. Always be willing to be the master of any dream that you may have in life, I know you will do well. I pray to God that nothing is beyond your reach in life, and that you always remember to put God first. Thank you for being the inspiration for my research study.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my Grandmother for always being my inspiration for wanting to do my best in life. My parents for making an amazing human being. I would like to thank my friends for allowing me to vent and often times listened to me complain about the amount of time and work that went into this process. Sylvia was the reason I even took the leap of faith.

I also owe much gratitude to Dr. Robin, who placed me in dissertation boot camp right when I was trying to give up. Dr. Robin, you gave me a confidence I didn't know I had in me. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Noriega and Dr. Cornett, who pushed me to limits I didn't know I could reach. I would like to thank each of my family members who said an encouraging word, and my cousin Vincent who inspired me by becoming a published author before 21 years of age. I appreciate each African American male doctor who took the time in these perilous times that COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the United States, your time will never go unnoticed. In closing, to my friends Clevitta and Taniesha, and everybody else on this journey who is African American, I say to you this may be a long journey that may seem as if it will never end, but I encourage you to stay the course. Once you all are done, you would have fulfilled a prophecy of our ancestors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The history pertaining to the lack of educational opportunities for African

Americans in the United States has been well identified by the National Center for

Education Statistics (NCES). According to the NCES (2015), African American students'

admission into higher education institutions increased from 10% to 15% between 1976

and 2012. This increase reflects a trend that a greater number of African American

students are seeking higher education but compared to their Caucasian counterparts, a

significant gap remains in terms of admissions. The difference in the number of African

American men with doctoral degrees and the general population is now increasing. From

1976 until 2017, doctoral students became more diverse. Results of a study conducted by

the Council of Graduate Schools in 2017 revealed 53.5% of all the students enrolled in

doctoral degree programs were female, and of those enrolled students, 23.9% were

underrepresented minorities (Okahana & Zhou, 2018). Although the literature is growing,

there are still areas in which little is known about underrepresented minorities in higher

education. Warde (2014) explained that African American women are enrolled in college

at twice the rate of African American men and at higher rates than Caucasian men and

women. There is a disparity in higher education achievement between African Americans

and Caucasians, with relatively low numbers of African American men attending and

graduating from an institution of higher education with a degree. The NCES (2007b)

reported that 1,253 (3.8%) doctoral degrees awarded in the United States were earned by

African Americans in 1976 (Ingram, 2016). Of that number, doctoral degrees were

earned by 766 (61%) African American men. More recently, the NCES (2012) reported

that 10,417 (7.4%) doctoral degrees earned in the United States were earned by African

Americans in 2010. Of that number, African American women were the majority recipients of those degrees (Ingram, 2016).

The literature is not as prevalent concerning the African American male doctoral student, even though in the United States a number of laws and policies, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, or national origin) and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (prohibiting sex discrimination), have been created throughout history in an attempt to advance the education of minorities. The disenfranchisement of African Americans in the United States originated during the time of slavery when African Americans were condemned to a lifetime of servitude, meaning they were unable to learn to read and write English and were not considered to be a whole human being. Prior to the abolition of slavery, for tax purposes slave owners wanted to count only free persons. However, there were many states advocating for counting slaves toward their total and Congress stepped in and compromised to count slaves as three-fifths of a person (T. S. Jenkins, 2006; Woodson, 1919).

The low number of African American men receiving doctorates should raise concern among students, faculty, and administrators in higher education. Diversity in higher education is a subject that must constantly be considered, as it is important and beneficial to all parties. Nussbaum and Chang (2003) reported diversity has an impact on every aspect of higher education, including leadership engagement, student enrollment, and curricular development. Hence, there is a need for those in leadership to also come from diverse backgrounds. According to Conchas (2006), interactions with diverse faculty from different ethic backgrounds provide students an opportunity to learn a

different leadership style. Leaders must go beyond simply developing initiatives of laws and policies. They may need to view African American men as a group that needs additional awareness and motivation. Promoting self-awareness about pursuing higher education among group members and motivating group members to reduce the discrepancy between the goals and the current performance of the group might be even more beneficial to all levels of leadership when it comes to motivating and implemented activities within this group (Peterson & Behfar, 2005).

Problem Statement

A vast number of individuals receive doctoral degrees but there remains a shortage of representation by African American men. It will take the involvement of individuals at all levels of leadership to assist in developing a significant change. Berry (2018) illustrated that the lack of African Americans holding a doctoral degree in the United States is a pattern indicated in the number of African American women (44.8%) and men (33.1%) versus their Caucasian counterparts. He found that only 7.9% of the total African American male population in the United States in the age group of 18 to 24 years were undergraduates at public flagship colleges and universities (Berry, 2018). Hence, this underrepresentation contributes to the small pool of potential recruits from which leaders of colleges and universities can choose applicants when attempting to sustain diversity in their student body.

One initial attempt to rectify the unequal treatment of African Americans was the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case that supported the idea that separate but equal was constitutional in all capacities of humanity, including education. The idea of separate but equal was inconsistent because things were not equal.

The verdict enshrined the doctrine of "separate but equal" as a constitutional justification for segregation, safeguarding the survival of laws geared toward discrimination (Vann Woodward, 1964). In addition, the groundbreaking case in Topeka, Kansas, of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, declared segregation in education unconstitutional. In this lawsuit, Oliver Brown claimed schools for Black children were not equal to White schools. The case went before the U.S. District Court in Kansas, which agreed that public school segregation had a "detrimental effect upon the colored children" (Sunstein, 2004 p. 103).

According to the NCES (2015), African American students' enrollment in higher education institutions increased from 10% to 15% between 1976 and 2012. Although this trend indicates a greater number of African American students are seeking higher education, a significant gap still exists in enrollment when compared to the students' Caucasian counterparts. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned discrimination everywhere federal funds were spent, commanding the government to act on the discrimination within the school system. The completion rate among African Americans pursuing a bachelor's degree or higher is lower in comparison to other ethnic groups (Everett, Rogers, Hummer, & Krueger, 2011).

According to the NCES (2012), the number of African American men attending college is lower than other ethic groups. The overall number of degrees granted to women across all ethnicities exceeds the number awarded to men, and the discrepancy between African American male and female college graduates is the largest (NCES, 2012). Musu-Gillette et al. (2016) specified that despite some gains, the rate of progress in terms of education has varied among ethic groups and differences by race and ethnicity

persist in terms of increases in attainment and progress on key indicators of educational performance. For example, the percentage of adults age 25 and older who had earned at least a bachelor's degree in 2013 was highest for Asian adults (52%). Of the other racial and ethic groups, 14% of Hispanic adults, 15% of American Indian/Alaska Native adults, 16% of Pacific Islanders, 19% of African Americans, 32% of adults of two or more races, and 33% of Caucasian adults had earned at least a bachelor's degree (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). African American men have pursued doctoral degrees at a lower percentage than men of other ethnic groups. If the number of African American men pursuing a doctoral degree increases, other African Americans may be influenced by their achievement and decide to pursue a doctoral degree.

There has been uncertainty in the past that may have discouraged African Americans from pursuing degrees. Affirmative action programs were founded to disrupt the visible and invisible barriers, to make laws fair for those who have been left behind, and to make sure everyone is given an equal chance regarding higher education and employment (Civil Rights 101, 2001). There is no doubt that the government has made attempts at bettering the U.S. education system for the good of those who have been discriminated against for many years (Civil Rights 101, 2001). In spite of the fact that studies have shown African American men are primarily undereducated when it comes to middle and high school education and graduate at only half the rate as their Caucasian counterparts, between 1976 and 2017, very little scholarly research was conducted to identify any activities introduced by leadership to help combat these low graduation rates (J. H. Jackson, 2011). Some have considered the immense impact of educational disparity economically, politically, socially, and personally within the African American

community and the nation as a whole ("News & views," 2005). In recent research,

leadership and the impact of leaders on African American male doctoral students has not

been looked at through the lens of students' educational experiences. It is apparent that in

the past, young African American men were not always included in the conversation

about the future economy.

Gibbs (1988) stated the United States has yet to acknowledge that its future

economy and advancement are intricately tied to the fate of young African American

men. Gibbs stated:

> [African American men] will drain more and more of the resources, if they do not
> contribute to the economy. [African American men] will oversee urban decay and
> urban chaos, if they cannot participate in the revitalization of the cities. The
> United States will enter into the 21st century with more serious social, political
> and economic problems if they are locked out of the technological and scientific
> professions. This will place the nation at an even greater competitive disadvantage
> and threaten its position as the leader in the western world. (p. 28)

As a result of the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, the U.S. Supreme Court

ruled that every state had to either build a separate and equal school for African

Americans or desegregate. As a result of the forced desegregation, Caucasian schools

elected to close. Schools that did integrate started to segregate centered around the

academic ability of students. African American students were singled out and placed in

special education classes, although this placement was not justified, whereas Caucasian

students were placed in advanced classes (Stephan, 1978). In 1865, an agreement

regarding the education of African Americans began after the 13th amendment of the

U.S. Constitution outlawed all forms of intentional servitude (Vergo et al., 2018). The

Civil War began a period of Reconstruction, in which the South was forced to rejoin the

Union and the northern ruling class was tasked with providing citizenship to African

Americans (Kliebard, 1987). Despite these occurrences, deficiencies remain in the nation's education system.

A more recent case also reflects the deficiency in the education system. The case of *Williams v. State of California* was filed in the year 2000 by 100 students as a class action lawsuit (California Department of Education, 2016). The case encompassed suing the San Francisco County Superior, the State of California, state agencies, and the California Department of Education (California Department of Education, 2016). The origin of the lawsuit was to address the lack of support provided by the State of California to low-income students, immigrant students, and African American students via fundamental tools that would assist these students in obtaining an appropriate education (California Department of Education, 2016). Public schools did not have access to proper instructional instruments, secure school accommodations, or qualified educators. The end result was the State of California agreeing to provide the necessary items to produce a conducive working environment for students in August of 2004 (California Department of Education, 2016).

An additional dilemma for African Americans entering graduate programs in general is that so many of them are the first to attend college in their family, deemed as first-generation college students (Owens, Lacey, Rawls, & Holbert-Quince, 2010). Therefore, many perceive they have achieved success once they have successfully gained an undergraduate degree. Students not classified as first-generation students can rely on the experiences of previous family members to help them adapt to the college environment, whereas first-generation students will normally spend a lot of time adjusting to the college environment (Barrett, Ghezzi, & Satterfield, 2015). First-

generation college students also face other issues in the decision-making process for continuing a degree past the undergraduate level, such as parents' financial challenges and the unavailability of other types of educational resources (Longmire-Avital & Miller-Dyce, 2015, p. 376). There might be a need to take care of family first. Students who are considered first-generation students, which is a category into which many African Americans fall, often have several disadvantages (Hayes, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of African American men who earned doctoral degrees to obtain an understanding of some of the activities implemented by leaders that motivated them to pursue a higher education. More importantly, the goal was to identify what activities leaders may be able to implement to make a significant change in this present trend. Identifying the methods and activities that can be implemented to help increase the completion rates for these individuals will take the involvement of all levels of leadership.

Critical race theory (CRT) served as the theoretical framework to enlighten how some of the activities of the past resulted in the present situation. Though a qualitative design may start with such a structure for a theoretical framework to prevent the researcher from forcing preconceptions on the findings, the theoretical framework of a qualitative study often emerges in the data analysis phase. However, through CRT, the elements of the phenomena adjoining African American men's journey as doctoral students and their experiences in graduate school were investigated. The study was designed to examine an applicable theory with regard to the graduate educational experiences of African American men using qualitative methods, inclusive of descriptive

and historical methodologies. This may also explain some of the previous leadership involvement and possible requirements for the future.

In addition, the researcher attempted to expound on the relationships between events and behaviors that may have influenced African American male doctoral students while working toward their doctoral degrees. Enriched understanding of these relationships may contribute to a possible increase in the enrollment and graduation rates of African American men pursuing doctoral degrees. The opportunity to chronicle their lives was intended to reveal suggestions for university policies regarding the impartiality of student opportunity and access to higher education.

Retention strategies are among the major strategies for increasing the graduation rate of doctoral students. Leaders will have to place a major emphasis on retaining African American men in their educational institutions in order to encourage them to pursue a higher degree. To retain individuals, it is important to have quality recruitment practices. Therefore, effective recruitment practices must be in place in order for substantial retention to occur (Mooring, 2016). Improving enrollment may contribute to an increase in the retention and graduation rates of African American men enrolled in doctoral degree programs. Improving retention may also have a connection to institutional policy regarding the equity of student opportunity.

Research Question

The two research questions used to guide this study were:

1. What are the various activities that might be implemented by leaders to increase the completion rates of African Americans men receiving doctoral degrees?

2. What types of activities can be implemented to encourage African American men to become more motivated to seek a higher degree and encourage others to do likewise?

The absence of minority doctorate students generally can deter the growth of diversity within institutions and perpetuates the lack of leaders for African American students. Faculty and leaders are often seen as a part of the frontline to assist in motivating students to remain in college and seek higher degrees, but several institutions have been forced to make reductions in faculty because of budgetary financial requirements (Schumacher, 2015). When this occurs, there is a negative impact on institutions with small enrollments, such as historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Therefore, leaders are forced to develop various strategies and activities to increase the enrollment and completion rates of African Americans at all degree levels.

Even the attention provided by the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities toward the improvement in African American educational facilities by showing increased recognition to HBCUs with the Higher Education Act of 1964 has had very little impact on enrollment in these facilities (Arroyo, Palmer, Maramba, & Louis, 2017). An important element of understanding how to increase African American representation in doctoral programs is exploring the leadership and activities that have been successful or unsuccessful in increasing enrollment numbers.

Further investigation by leadership will be required to determine the types of activities that can be implemented to encourage African American men to become more motivated to seek higher degrees and to encourage others to do likewise. According to Jury, Smeding, and Darnon (2015), university systems provide the same opportunities for

every student to succeed. Most HBCUs do not have the financial support needed to compete with larger universities that have vast amounts of income from sports teams and other means. Therefore, many of these major universities are far less affordable to African Americans. Studies have shown lower social class students have fewer chances to succeed in these university educational systems as compared to higher social class students (Jury et al., 2015, p. 1). Hence, because of issues related to status and affordability, leaders will need to be creative in developing additional strategies for attracting African American men into doctoral programs.

Definitions

The following terms are frequently used throughout this dissertation:

Barrier: A hindrance to access, equality, or possession based on an individual's gender, ethnicity, racial heritage, limitations, religious preferences, or sexual orientation, whether actual or perceived (R. Jenkins, 2016).

Counterstories: Counterstories can be archives, testimonies, or discussions that marginalized groups use to respond to stories previously espoused by the dominant group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Historically Black college or university (HBCU): Higher education institutions that were created to assist in serving the educational needs of Black Americans. These colleges and universities were established prior to 1964 and their primary task was, and is, the education of African Americans (U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

Leadership: Leadership is considered as the focus of group procedures, as a matter of personality, as a matter of inducing compliance, as the exercise of encouragement, as particular behaviors, as a form of influence, as a power relation, as an

instrument to achieve goals, and as many combinations of these definitions (Bass, 1990, p. 6).

Mentoring: A unique relationship in which an experienced individual assists another individual in developing skills and knowledge for personal and professional growth (Berg, 2016).

Microaggressions: A type of subtle abuse aimed at minorities that can be visual, verbal, nonverbal, conscious, or unconscious (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Motivation: A controlled process through which an individual is impelled to behave, or in this case to pursue a doctoral degree, in a particular manner (Herzberg, 1959).

Retention: The ability of an academic institution's leaders to keep enrolled those who are academically achieving and meeting all of the financial and scholastic obligations to the university to obtain a degree (Tinto, 2010).

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to contribute to the understanding of the importance of leadership implementing of activities that provide support systems and engagement among African American men pursuing doctoral degrees. The information obtained can be used to improve retention policies, theory, and practices among leadership at institutions of higher education, as well as contribute to the increasing body of knowledge about leadership's impact on the success of African American men in academia. Results should also be beneficial in terms of encouraging African American men to move forward in doctorate programs and for other African American scholars to do the same.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The focus in this research was on how African Americans are underrepresented in doctoral degree programs. In general, participation by African Americans in doctoral programs is low in comparison to their White counterparts. According to Hussar and Bailey (2013), between the years of 2006 and 2010, there was a 20.3% decrease in the number of White doctoral students whereas the number of Black doctoral students increased by 4.7%. It is still worth noting that the number of Black students enrolled in doctoral programs is still very low. These findings were supported by an in-depth analysis review of the subject of the study that covered current peer-reviewed journals and dissertations (Fink, 2010). The literature review included empirical research in the areas of leadership, motivation, opportunities, barriers, and African American culture in general. The review began with an investigation of research pertinent to the leadership initiatives that hindered or provided opportunities for college attendance and recruitment. The literature related to how leadership practices influence African American men to attend institutions of higher learning and pursue doctoral degrees was also reviewed (Janta, Lugosi, & Brown, 2012). The literature reviewed for this study also contained a focus on the factors that influence the selection of colleges and retention in educational institutions. The influence of leadership within these institutions was a main focus of interest. Keywords used to locate relevant studies included leadership, motivation and preparation for college, retention, role models, leadership initiatives, socioeconomic challenges, educational job expectations, African American culture, and barriers. Date parameters were established from 2015 to 2020. However, books, journal articles, and

other dissertations pertaining to relevant theory and important variables were included in the literature review irrespective of date.

Different researchers have confirmed that graduate school advisors can have a great impact on the performance of Black doctoral students. Farmer and Hope (2015) conducted an exploration of the impact of various factors on doctoral students of either Latino or Black descent. Farmer and Hope further stated the main factors that motivated and contributed to the retention of Black doctoral students come from the advice they receive from advisors in schools. Postgraduate students who had supportive advisors were highly motivated and completed their doctoral studies. Farmer and Hope affirmed that positive interactions between students and faculty are a key reinforcement of a sense of belonging for Black students in graduate school.

Family support has been shown to be another critical factor in attracting Black students to postgraduate studies. Parents can bridge the gap when the doctoral students are not connected to the faculty (Farmer & Hope, 2015). Family members act as a source of encouragement for postgraduate students in their pursuit of higher learning (Farmer & Hope, 2015). In addition to the support various postgraduate students receive from their parents, peers play a role in terms of giving encouragement to postgraduate students to complete their doctoral degrees. Peer support promotes the integration of Black students in their respective departments.

The search engines and databases used to locate relevant literature were Google, ProQuest, Academic Search Premier, and Business Source Elite, among others (Farmer & Hope, 2015). The services provided by the National Louis University library were used extensively, along with interlibrary loans and the public library. The reference lists at the

end of articles and dissertations were also scoured to locate previous studies on the topic. Additionally, educational system websites that pertained to historical data of HBCUs and other statistical data concerning the attendance and retention of African Americans students in college and their trends for selection were consulted.

The search for relevant literature revealed there is a lack of empirical research that specifically addressed leadership practices as they relate to motivating factors that pertain to African American men attending institutions of higher learning to receive doctoral degrees (Janta et al., 2012). The majority of the research on African Americans attending college related to college selection and first-generation college attendees (Jury et al., 2015). Therefore, leadership practices pertaining to motivators and barriers in general had to be reviewed to provide a more in-depth review of how leadership practices may influence African American men to attend college and to also work toward graduate degrees. The five main areas of concentration of the literature review are leadership roles, motivation, barriers, opportunities, and African American culture, marginalization, and discrimination in various learning institutions.

The Leadership Role

African American men are not pursuing doctoral degrees and leadership is not making sufficient efforts to influence them to do so (Janta et al., 2012). In a phenomenological study by Levine (2008), the question asked was: Why do African American men decline to enroll in graduate-level programs? A purposive sample of 16 African American male college students between the ages of 20 and 25 was targeted. Four major themes emerged from the study: (a) stereotypes, (b) monetary reasons, (c) standardized testing, and (d) being content. The students did not have any stereotypes on

matters relating to school but highlighted major limitations in terms of capital and

minimal interest as the main causes of a lack of interest in the pursuit of doctoral degrees

in various schools. This is where leadership comes in, as Levine concluded that African

American men need to be challenged to envision the potential for academic and

economic growth (Levine, 2008).

As discussed by researchers, leadership is a key component in the success of

corporate diversity, which is a common part of business strategies. It is critical for all

levels of leadership to manage diversity effectively. First, it is important to define

diversity management. Diversity management reflects a shift from paradigms such as

fairness, access, and legitimacy toward the paradigms of effectiveness and innovation

(Thomas & Ely, 1996).

Researchers have observed that leaders need to have a sense of passion for the

success of diversity initiatives and not treat them as a box to check off for corporate

positioning within the community or industry. Usowicz (2008) showed that leadership's

role in managing diversity is complex as leaders need to understand the needs and

expectations of the workforce while balancing the needs of the corporation. Usowicz

stated, "The connection between cultures and leadership is complex because each culture

has different expectations in regard to leadership" (p. 1).

Leadership's main responsibility and concerns are productivity and the bottom

line. Bass (as cited in Usowicz, 2008) defined leadership as:

> An interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a
> structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations
> of the members. Leaders are agents of change—persons whose acts affect other
> people more than other people's acts affect them. Leadership occurs when one
> group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group. (p.
> 16)

In interacting with employees, leaders need to be aware of the diverse population of the organization to understand how to communicate and motivate each employee and to obtain maximum results. Culture dictates how people communicate and behave. Managers who are aware of different cultural norms are less likely to incorrectly interpret behavior (Garden Swartz & Rowe, 2001). Leaders need to embrace diversity as a component of the business and demonstrate their commitment to the diversity strategy; they need to comprehend how embracing diversity strategies affect the bottom line through establishing happy and productive employees.

Researchers have shown that diversity strategies and the use of employee resource groups lead to employee satisfaction, as they make the workplace a positive place. Janta et al. (2012) used a multifactor model of leadership based on transformational and transactional leadership. Through this model, they observed that employees who are satisfied in the workforce have comprehensive knowledge and understanding of what is involved in their jobs and their individual roles in the organization in terms of quality and productivity. Transformational leadership includes seven leadership factors of "charisma, inspirational, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward, management-by-exception and laissez-faire leadership" (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999, p. 441). The multifactor leadership model is based on Bass's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, which was first developed in 1985 and has been widely used as a benchmark for identifying behavioral styles for effective leadership.

One of the main actions leaders need to understand is the importance of leadership in motivating individuals. T. D. Jackson (2016) investigated the relationship between the transformational leadership style and employees' perceptions of leadership

success in higher education. The transformative leadership style is a type of leadership in which teams are involved in creating a vision and effecting change within an organization. T. D. Jackson found that the four components of transformational leadership (i.e., idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation) had an impact on the expected outcomes of followers. Intellectual simulation involves providing guidance and support for employees to make them more creative and innovative in the workplace. Individualized considerations entail an identification of the specific characteristics and demands of individual group members as a mechanism to increase the general performance of the group. Inspirational motivation involves enacting a sense of inspiration among followers so they ensure the maximum performance of their groups. Idealized influence is achieved when different leaders act as a source of motivation and role models for followers.

The Role of Motivation

Motivational theories can often have an impact on perception and future decision-making. Results of Green's (2015) study of the influence of personal attributes and satisfaction among African American men about educational choices indicated there is a significant relationship between academic achievement and social satisfaction. It is also a predictor of African American men enrolling at a particular institution if they had it to do over again (Green, 2015). Herzberg indicated the factors that cause job satisfaction and motivation are distinct from the factors that cause job dissatisfaction and suggested that each employee's basic needs consist of the actual work itself and the degree of challenge involved (motivator needs) as well as the physical and psychological work environment (hygiene needs), and he thus proposed a motivation-hygiene theory, also referred to as

the two-factor theory (George & Jones, 2012). Herzberg proposed that employees would be satisfied when their motivator needs were met and would be dissatisfied if their motivator needs were not met. Additionally, employees can be satisfied when hygiene needs are met, but at the same time can remain dissatisfied even when these needs are met (George & Jones, 2012). In other words, eliminating hygiene factors does not guarantee employee satisfaction or employee motivation, but can foster a peaceful work environment within an organization, and employee satisfaction can be improved with motivators.

In attempting to understand and explain employee behavior, Herzberg (2003) further explained that employee dissatisfaction was not the opposite of satisfaction, and vice versa. Herzberg believed this differentiation lies in the belief that one comes from a biological drive and inherent need to avoid pain and discomfort and the other stems from the uniquely human desire to experience psychological growth through personal achievement. Growth or motivator factors that are central in the workplace include the actual work being done, achievement and recognition, responsibility, and professional advancement. The dissatisfaction–avoidance, or hygiene factors, are extraneous elements in the workforce, such as supervision, company policy, administration, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, salary, job security, and status (Herzberg, 2003).

The basic premise of the motivator-hygiene theory includes the motivation of employees, and organizational leaders should provide an enriching workplace that fosters motivator or growth factors to motivate employees. Herzberg (2003) differentiated between the ideas of job enrichment and job enlargement, positing that job enrichment facilitates an opportunity for employees to experience psychological growth whereas job

enlargement entails actually making the employee's job larger. Robinson (2009) suggested Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory can be used as a core element in improving customer growth and retention, as an organization's leaders endeavor to understand customers' changing needs by determining customers' perceptions of the quality of products or services.

Although organizational leaders widely accept Herzberg's work, Sachau (2007) criticized Herzberg as relying heavily on a single and biased research methodology to support the theory. However, Sachau reaffirmed that Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory is still a relevant and valuable tool that organizational leaders can use in developing and evaluating employee satisfaction and productivity schemes.

A major motivational factor in college selection and retention among many African American men and women is the presence of Greek-letter organizations on the campus (Janta et al., 2012). Studies have shown the involvement and support of these organizations can improve the academic and psychosocial outcomes of African American male students. Ford (2014) conducted a grounded theory study and stated participants indicated the role of learning institutions is to improve the persistence and success of these students.

Detailed Findings From the Literature

The U.S. Census Bureau indicated African Americans pursuing undergraduate degrees account for up to 15.3% of the student population, but only 6% of these students pursue higher education (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). The lack of African American faculty makes it difficult to cultivate a unique perspective on education and research. An increase in the number of African American educators could help minority students accomplish

their goals as they would feel more welcomed into their institutions. The lack of diversity has affected Black students in various areas, such as student enrollment, curricular development, faculty engagement, board governance, and institutional outcomes (Janta et al., 2012).

For an extended duration, the graduation rates of African Americans in doctoral studies have failed to increase at a tremendous rate in comparison to other races, such as Whites (Janta et al., 2012). Past studies have revealed Blacks are affected by a multiplicity of factors such as financial and academic factors, as well as the campus environment at predominantly White institutions (Ingram, 2016). More specifically, African Americans have argued that financial issues have significantly affected their ambition to pursue further education. According to Jones (2017), African American students pursuing doctoral studies continue to rely on loans and personal income to sponsor their doctorates. In general, African American families report a lower family income and socioeconomic status (SES) compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Perry et al., 2016).

By 2017, African Americans represented about 6% of the full-time students in U.S. higher institutions of learning (Janta et al., 2012). This implies fewer individuals from communities of color get the privilege to pursue PhDs. The scarcity of Black doctoral degree recipients has been attributed to the lack of diversity among educators (Janta et al., 2012). Between 2002 and 2017, about 50,000 students earned doctorate degrees, but the population of African Americans who earned PhDs barely rose from 5.1% to 5.4%. Since time immemorial, African Americans have failed to pursue higher education as a result of failure to nurture their interests, a higher level of disrespect in

their professions, high costs, and ill-treatment and discrimination during the admission process (Janta et al., 2012).

According to Janta et al. (2012), almost 50% of African Americans who complete their PhDs graduate with a considerable debt burden. Compared to other racial groups, Blacks seek loans at a higher rate. African Americans are also not exposed to research and experience during their undergraduate studies, and this hinders their elevation in research careers. Scholars have challenged stakeholders to embrace diversity in institutions of learning because it is a vital element in a pluralistic and interconnected universe. Diversity would help educators and leaners understand the conditions that will create a conducive environment for all people to succeed regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.

Methodology

Ingram (2016) applied a qualitative method to understand the lived experiences of 18 African American male PhD students at predominantly White institutions. From the findings of this study, the participants agreed about the importance of faculty encouragement, the motivation to pursue a doctorate, and the personal motivations for developing their aspiration toward doctorate studies. The male participants agreed that mentors play a huge role in motivating students of color to pursue doctorate studies. Additionally, supportive faculty members have the skills to ensure PhD learners are determined to complete their studies. Most people advance their education to better their community. Personal motivation among young Blacks can motivate them to pursue PhDs to combat social issues (C. Turner & Grauerholz, 2017).

The findings in a study conducted by Overton (2018) highlighted four positive motivational factors for African Americans to pursue doctoral studies: family, career goals, community, and support. However, the participants revealed incidences of marginalization in institutions of learning. The results also revealed the importance of African American professors in positively influencing Black students to enroll in higher education (Overton, 2018). Furthermore, in a phenomenological study, Snyder, de Brey, and Dillow (2016) investigated the role of mentoring in the professional development of African American men at postsecondary institutions. Results showed African American men claimed the advice given by their mentors shaped their professional development. Also, candor and trust toward mentors motivated Black men to pursue higher education (Nottingham, Mazerolle, & Barrett, 2017).

Breitenbach, Bernstein, Ayars, and Konecny (2019) investigated the influence of family on the success of African American doctoral students. Results of their qualitative case study showed PhD students consider their immediate and extended family to be crucial in offering positive support throughout their doctoral studies. A lack of family support can hinder the success of doctoral students. Regarding African American female doctorate students, motivational factors, according to most studies, include support from peers and family as well as support from faculty and administrators (Davis, 2016).

African Americans have faced challenges in their pursuit of higher education, leading to a low number of PhD graduates among communities of color (Janta et al., 2012). The factors influencing African Americans to enroll and complete doctorate studies include family and peer support, support from faculty and administrators, and mentoring programs.

Determination to Overcome Marginalization

Overton (2018) attempted to establish some of the motivational factors that push African American men to pursue graduate studies and stressed the fact that African American people are disproportionately represented in the academe. The author underscored the fact that African American students account for up to 15.3% of the U.S. student population both at the undergraduate and graduate levels (Overton, 2018). However, the same ethnic group only constitutes 6% of faculty positions in colleges and universities. Notably, African Americans face struggles such as underfunding, institutional discrimination, and other social factors that impede their inclusion in university faculty positions (Overton, 2018). Nonetheless, despite facing many challenges and inequalities, Overton noted there are still some individuals from the African American community who overcome them and go all the way to fulfill their academic dreams.

The need to overcome isolation and marginalization was identified by Overton (2018) as one of the factors that motivates the majority of African American men to pursue and complete doctoral degree programs. In an interview with an African American professor, the professor recalled that marginalization was evident in the curriculum as it was created by White counterparts to advance and foster their own relationships with absolutely no regard for individuals from other ethnic groups (Overton, 2018). The professor further noted that African American doctoral students are more likely to experience marginalization at any point in their studies, particularly in the form of isolation. African American doctoral students are forced to function in strange and, at times, hostile environments with an irrelevant curriculum (Overton, 2018). Furthermore,

as most of the instructors at this level were not African American, they were mostly culturally insensitive, which left the doctoral students disoriented and feeling isolated.

B. Turner (2019) noted that few African American individuals enroll in different areas of specialization, and in most cases bear the tag of the "only one" in their classrooms. African American students are more likely to be the only members of their ethnic descent in their respective courses, which can have a negative impact on their school life (B. Turner, 2019). Moreover, as the only members of their communities in the class, African American doctoral students are usually assumed to be the representatives of their entire communities, not only exerting more mental pressure but also being considered as outsiders (B. Turner, 2019). Holding the status as the only African American student in their classroom made them extremely popular and they ended up participating in multiple roles and executing numerous service functions but did not feel appreciated and instead felt they were regarded as a token. B. Turner further highlighted how microaggressions influenced the racial climate in colleges. Microaggressions are situations that make African American doctoral students question themselves as well as their position in higher education. Most of the former doctoral students who were interviewed indicated microaggressions were a primary factor that discouraged them from pursuing doctoral degrees and caused them to drop out of their respective doctoral programs.

Leaders of universities across the United States have adopted numerous anti-racism policies in a bid to protect the interests of the minorities within their institutions (Janta et al., 2012). Despite such efforts, a significant number of African American doctoral students still encounter microaggressions and situations that result in

discouragement, frustration, and demotivation to continue with their studies. B. Turner (2019) noted some of the African American PhD holders indicated that despite efforts by their institutions to eliminate discrimination and racism, their encounters with White faculty members left them disoriented. Though the White faculty members did not directly insult them, the fact that they tended to force stereotypes upon them in a bid to make them feel lesser than the other students made them want to discontinue their studies (B. Turner, 2019). As a result, a significant number of the African American doctoral students encountered instances of self-doubt that negatively affected their progress and effectiveness with their studies. A substantial number of students highlighted the significance of having fellow African American students to provide support and eliminate the stereotypes they frequently encountered from White faculty members as well as White colleagues in their classes.

Overton (2018) stressed that the leadership of various universities across the United States must begin to understand the significance of the racial climate within their institutions. The author asserted that it is not enough to implement anti-discriminatory policies in universities as efforts should go further toward sensitizing White faculty members as well as students about the negative impact of imposing stereotypes on African American students (Overton, 2018). Ultimately, addressing the underlying issues will be critical in motivating more African Americans to pursue doctoral degrees and eventually increasing the number of African American professors in universities across the country.

McCallum (2017) posited that a lack of diversity in universities has resulted in the institution of permanent racism in graduate schools. The institutional discrimination that

emerges as a result of a lack of diversity demotivates many African American doctoral students, forcing many to either discontinue their programs or to take much longer to complete. The African Americans interviewed by McCallum indicated they remained determined to complete their studies by being forced to understand the real situation around them and make the necessary adjustments. The PhD graduates recalled the significance of fostering personal relationships with their advisors, committee members, and faculty members in a bid to achieve success (McCallum, 2017). Furthermore, the African American doctoral students tapped into the existing university social support systems in addition to fostering positive peer interactions, faculty relationships, and social integrations, as well as seeking assistance with adjustment issues to ensure success during their graduate years. Overton (2018) reviewed a study conducted to identify the success and persistence factors among doctoral students. The findings of the study showed the success graduate students encountered at their respective places of work was directly linked to the persistence, resilience, and success they encountered during their graduate years at the university (McCallum, 2017). Most African American PhD holders attribute their effectiveness and success at their present workplaces to the socialization and persistence they nurtured during their student years in a bid to achieve significant success in their studies.

Institutional Racism in the System

McCallum (2017), in establishing the reason for the lack of diversity in graduate schools as well as among faculty, inferred that the inescapable attitudes of racism continue to limit the educational opportunities of African Americans across the country. Whites have a greater probability of completing both professional and graduate programs

than their African American counterparts as a result of the ethnic challenges with which African Americans continuously grapple (McCallum, 2017). Additionally, the lower number of African Americans in universities may have an adverse impact on the few existing African American students studying on different campuses across the United States. These students often experience feelings of isolation as they are most likely to be the only members from their ethnic groups in a class. The fact that there are few or no African American professors on their respective campuses or teaching their courses complicates the learning environment (McCallum, 2017). The lack of diversity in graduate schools provides African American students with few examples of their ethnicity and culture as well as no faculty professors of color with whom to share their ordeals (McCallum, 2017). The widening distance between African American doctoral students and faculty as well as administration signifies that their issues are hardly factored into the daily operations of their institutions of higher learning.

Grollman (2017), a PhD graduate of African American descent, recounted that institutional racism was part of his graduate program. He recalled how the majority of his White student colleagues always considered him to have grown up in the ghetto despite the fact that his entire upbringing was in suburbia. Members of White communities often assume that all colored individuals are brought up in poverty and believe the slums and the ghettos remain their primary areas of upbringing (Grollman, 2017). Furthermore, African American men are automatically associated, by their White counterparts, with crime as a survival tactic in such harsh neighborhoods. The situation has not been made any better as the socio-cultural events tend to put greater emphases on the hard life African Americans encounter within their ghetto neighborhoods to survive (Grollman,

2017). As such, an African American student to have come so far to join a doctoral program is always treated as a surprise and a case of pity considering that members from other ethnic groups do not expect African Americans to be part of academe. Grollman further noted the casualness with which racism and lack of diversity cases were treated. He remembered how one of the scholars and a member of the faculty saw no offense with the instructions of his assistant that prohibited the PhD students in his class from asking questions that profiled their African American students (Grollman, 2017). The professor took no issue with Whites "talking African American" with their African American interviewees, indicating they had no idea about how racial profiling made their victims feel.

Grollman (2017) further observed the fact that most of the PhD holders, some of whom were faculty members in established universities, were not surprised that such levels of racism occurred in doctoral programs. The African American professors indicated they constantly felt the wrath of racism in their daily graduate school life. Grollman therefore recommended that African American male prospective graduate students be aware that racism is the norm in academe even in situations in which students are shielded from microaggressions. Grollman noted racism has been deeply entrenched in the daily operations of graduate schools, meaning it directly and indirectly dictates who and what gets published as well as who and what gets funded. Racism will also dictate who gets admitted and who graduates as well as who gets hired and tenured and so forth. Therefore, Grollman inferred that as African American men embark on selecting their respective graduate departments, they should do so from the perspective of how much racism they will experience as opposed to whether or not they will actually

experience racism. Grollman urged prospective African American male doctoral students to carefully weigh their options as well as identify the possible and existing support systems available to help them successfully maneuver through their doctoral programs.

Alston, Guy, and Campbell (2017) noted a significant number of African American doctoral students tend to assume the presence of a few African American faculty members will be sufficient to overcome the challenges posed by otherwise racist graduate schools. Additionally, considering that the interdisciplinary relationships between the departments within the academe are greatly watered down, the assumption by prospective African American students that the presence of critical programs such as African American studies will compensate for the lack of race consciousness or diversity in the institution in their respective PhD programs such as sociology is a mere fallacy (Alston et al., 2017). It is critical for prospective African American doctoral students to perform their due diligence by scrutinizing each program they are considering in the graduate school. Part of their initial assignment is to establish contact with multiple individuals and offices, including current students and faculty members, to inquire about both their personal and professional experiences in relation to their coursework at the graduate school (Alston et al., 2017). Furthermore, part of their inquiries, especially for current African American doctoral students, is establishing the type and effectiveness of the support from and availability of faculty, with publishing, with funding opportunities, with teaching, with the surrounding communities, and with the university in general. If the interests of the prospective African American doctoral students are on subjects related to race, immigration, or ethnicity, it is critical for them to probe whether their work will be supported by the faculty as well as discreetly indicated in the prospectus that it will be

funded (Alston et al., 2017). Prospective African American doctoral students should take time to email or call different respondents and pose clear and concrete questions to get clear information on various issues that will affect their success once they commence their doctoral studies.

Grollman (2017) also emphasized the need for prospective African American doctoral students to contact various faculty members and ask questions. At this initial stage, it is critical for prospective doctoral students to also take note of both the number of African American faculty members as well as their positions in the faculty; that is, if they are full professors or tenured associates. Moreover, it was recommended that prospective African American students use their budding ethnographic skills to observe how central African American faculty members and students are in the department's functions whenever they visit their respective departments. Therefore, as prospective African American doctoral students prepare to commence their graduate programs, Grollman recommended establishing a critical support network ahead of time. Notably, the graduate program hardly focuses on strengthening the personal well-being of African American doctoral students; hence they should desist from relying on the programs to realize personal, spiritual, social, and intimate needs. As such, Grollman proposed that African American doctoral students should amass support beyond their graduate schools by identifying a community outside their programs. Additionally, African American students should try as much as possible to avoid engaging in intimate relationships with fellow students or faculty members as this could easily undermine their studies. Instead, African American doctoral students should be involved with a graduate student group in a bid to enhance their social support during their graduate school life (Grollman, 2017).

In other words, African American doctoral students should not entirely position their lives around their graduate programs but beyond to capture the simple details within their social environments.

Doctoral programs are usually involved and often become tough as a student progresses from one stage to the other. With increased learning, students are exposed to new ideas and facts, which demands more attention and research. Therefore, centering one's life on a graduate program could possibly become counterproductive with time; hence it is recommended that students find ways to unwind without fear that their words or actions will get back to their colleagues or faculty members. It can be difficult to navigate racism in a presumably race-neutral or anti-racist environment. As such, African American students must work to establish a balance between their quest to succeed in graduate school and in establishing authentic social lives away from daily busy schedules (Snyder et al., 2016). Notably, a significant number of White graduate students tend to register greater levels of success by simply striking a definite balance between their normal lives and hectic graduate school programs. Strongly embracing authenticity helps both White and African American students to effectively deal with challenges. Challenges such as failure to secure funding, lack of support from faculty members, or not doing enough to attain desirable results generate so much pressure that students become counterproductive in their quest to become successful doctoral students (Snyder et al., 2016). Techniques for effectively deflating the pressures are something most African American students do not have, putting most of them in positions that either make them take longer to graduate or abandon their studies altogether. Notably, there hardly exists a ready-made happy medium that African Americans can use to address the

racial challenges in their doctoral programs (Snyder et al., 2016). Therefore, it is critical to establish the perfect life balance to effectively succeed in their doctoral programs.

According to Janta et al. (2012), a significant number of academic studies have focused more on the adverse experiences and the inadequate support provided to African American men during both their undergraduate and graduate years in university. The anti-deficit model by Harper emerged as a significant tool in trying to understand the lived experiences of African American men as it provides a better perspective about the postgraduate experience. For instance, there is a perspective that is provided in a bid to put more emphasis on the factors that determine the low performance and rampant academic failure of African American men (Janta et al., 2012). Janta et al. provided an anti-deficit framework involving the college achievement and readiness, pre-college socialization, and post-college success in a bid to counter the deficit perspective and a better explanation of how African American men navigate their way through institutions of higher education, graduate schools, and the marketplace (Snyder et al., 2016). Recently, studies have pointed to specific African American male experiences, specifically their academic success. Snyder et al. (2016) deemed their results significant for the fact that several African American men expressed that their lack of readiness to join the academe adversely affected their quest to pursue both graduate and professional processes.

Salvo, Shelton, and Welch (2019) observed that African American male graduate students indicated there was a greater need for academic support considering that some doubted themselves and thought they were underprepared to pursue graduate studies, especially doctoral programs. As such, because of their existing feelings of under-

preparedness, the respondents revealed certain barriers and difficulty moving effectively

through graduate and doctoral programs. McCallum (2017) understood the effects of

having African Americans in classroom settings and the possible barriers they encounter

as compared to their peers. Furthermore, the respondents in McCallum's study reported

that seeking out systems of support such as the library, mentorship, or even counseling

whenever they felt they were in trouble academically was the most effective strategy to

adopt in the learning environment. McCallum suggested support services play a critical

role in the accomplishment of a graduate degree, indicating the significance of both

personal and academic support especially in completing a highly demanding academic

program such as a doctoral degree as well as in navigating daily challenges in their

professional lives.

Additionally, Grollman (2017), in recounting his own experience in graduate

school, stated that although African American doctoral students experience numerous

challenges in identifying and accessing mentorship support, a significant number are

able, at some point in their studies, to find a mentor, whether an administrator, friend,

professor, or simply a family member, to mentor and model them. Hence, easy access to

mentorship and counseling emerged as critical factors that African American doctoral

students felt increased their chances of success and completion of their programs.

Ultimately, access to mentorship, especially from faculty members, has emerged as one

of the most effective strategies for countering institutional racism. Notably, the same

model leaders of community colleges and universities use to establish solid mentorship

systems is highly recommended in doctoral programs (Snyder et al., 2016). Grollman

supported mentorship programs that actively and effectively engage African American

students as a means of countering attrition. Moreover, an effective mentorship program can be seen as a strong indicator of academic accomplishment both among students and the institution of higher learning. Forster (2019) agreed with Grollman's views and noted African American male respondents highly valued mentorship programs. As such, a significant number of participants indicated that upon the successful completion of their doctoral programs they purposely set out to either help out students or simply create mentorship programs or support systems that were anchored in their experiences as the ultimate guide.

Ingram (2016), in reviewing some of the things that motivate African American men to pursue doctoral degrees, also highlighted the racial barriers and microaggressions that led to discouragement not to join the academe. The author significantly underscored the bitter reality that African American men continuously experience racial barriers when pursuing their graduate studies. Despite the fact that the respondents experienced racial barriers, most were not deterred by their negative effects as they were not prevented from pursuing and attaining their doctoral degrees (Snyder et al., 2016). The African American men who were interviewed in Ingram's study indicated they were able to overcome the existing disparities as a result of the availability of strong social support from critical sources such as family, students, and faculty members. The author asserted that the social relationships between faculty members and their African American students are vital in the doctoral process. The availability of social support in the academe enabled African Americans to feel more accepted in the system and connected with the process (Ingram, 2016). Last, Ingram asserted that because the United States continues to experience a deficit perspective of African American men in educational settings in addition to the fact

that African American men still fall behind academically, understanding the highlighted factors is critical. Living at a time when race remains a contentious issue in the United States, understanding the factors that motivate African American men to pursue doctoral programs underscores the reality that race is a crucial factor that directly affects the social settings upon which they rely most for mental and psychological support. Therefore, it was proposed that graduate schools should promote support systems that effectively counter microaggressions in a bid to facilitate the erosion of some of the salient barriers members from this demographic group face within their respective university settings. In turn, Ingram further recommended interventions that aid in the uncovering of other components that can strengthen and motivate African American men through their doctoral programs. Additionally, Ingram acknowledged that there are existing support systems in place that counter academic issues, such as boosting access to mentorship programs as well as through instituting stronger social ties. On the contrary, overcoming such racial barriers may be challenging to African American doctoral students. Ingram noted that sustainable success is achieved by first gaining an in-depth understanding of the compositions of relationships as well as how such ties between African American men and faculty and other individuals within their social settings could be fostered to achieve maximum outcome.

In summation, enhancing the social settings of African American men in graduate schools is vital in addressing the shortage of members from this demographic group in the academe. Ingram (2016) highlighted the willingness of African American men to join doctoral programs and make their contributions in different academic programs. Yet, in response to certain experiences and circumstances, the number of individuals from this

demographic segment with doctoral attainment remains at a worryingly low level. It is critical to find a quick solution for the existing problem by first understanding the challenges African American men experience as well as considering their views on the most effective course of action that could be implemented to bridge the existing gaps (Snyder et al., 2016). For instance, Ingram noted the majority of his respondents indicated a need for mentoring strategies and additional academic support to provide social support and encouragement for graduate students to successfully complete their doctoral programs. The presence of critical social support often results in the adoption of personal and professional relationships and self-navigational skills; such skills and relationships are critical in enabling doctoral students to navigate the graduate school setting. Ingram noted his respondents were able to accomplish doctoral degree attainment as well as join the faculty after their studies as a result of harnessing the strong social and psychological support around them. Nonetheless, it remains a fact that African Americans continuously face microaggressions when pursuing their doctoral studies. However, most successfully navigate around the underlying racial barriers. Altogether, African American doctoral students continuously face challenges in their quest to attain doctoral degrees in graduate schools and rely more on their personal skill set to navigate racial barriers and successfully complete their doctoral programs.

Socioeconomic Status

The social environment is made up of the family, neighborhood, and other surrounding communities that influence the decisions African American men make. As such, the process of socialization based on academic achievement devalues the values, beliefs, and norms of the young people in this demographic group. Therefore, academic

achievement enables young people to functionally adapt as members of society with various roles and responsibilities. Forster (2019) stated social support commences with the emotional support of family, friends, and academe. Forster also stated institutions of learning as well as their stakeholders (i.e., parents, teachers, and neighborhoods) significantly influence the social support that defines academic success among African American boys. Hence, African American students often recognize self-socialization as a critical factor of experience to maneuver through elementary, undergraduate, and eventually the graduate school setting.

Forster (2019) observed that despite the fact that numerous kinds of social interactions are crucial to the academic excellence of African American men, their economic conditions directly affect their educational success as well. Economic conditions, including the income of their guardians, bear significant influence on the level of academic excellence of African American men in the United States. SES has been linked closely to the educational accomplishments of African American men from their formative academic years to graduate school (Snyder et al., 2016). Forster noted that SES reflects the ranking of an individual or family on a hierarchy according to access to or control over some combination of valued commodities such as power and wealth, as well as social status. SES hinges on three major components of parental education, parental income, and parental occupation. Forster also noted past studies showed African American men from lower income backgrounds were more likely to underperform on standardized tests as compared to their counterparts who came from a higher income background and had parents with high educational backgrounds as well. According to Snyder et al. (2016), with the diminishing group of high SES families, academic

opportunities continue to become slimmer and more strained. In essence, economic

hardships, higher levels of poverty, financial constraints, and unstable environments do

not necessarily restrict academic development in African American children. In other

words, African American parents who lead economically disadvantaged lives have been

closely linked with African American male achievement. What Forster tried to point out

is that high expectations and low SES do not necessarily translate into academic failure.

A high SES as well as low academic expectations does not necessarily denote a lack of

academic excellence either (Conley, Durlak, & Dickson, 2013). Still, Forster supported

the notion that it would be irresponsible to conclude that either high or low SES is the

primary variable that dictates educational achievement among African American male

students.

Commencing from elementary levels through graduate school, minors from

higher SES families have performed better academically than minors from lower SES

families (Conley et al., 2013). Even though a high SES does not guarantee high academic

performance, studies have shown academic excellence is, to some extent, directly related

to a high SES of the parents as well as the educational level of the father and mother

(Conley et al., 2013). In essence, a son is likely to end up with high economic success as

a result of being brought up by a father who attained higher educational status as well as

belongs to a higher socioeconomic class. Moreover, a mother's level of education is a

critical factor that can be used in revealing the success of a child from preschool to

institutions of higher learning. Therefore, the educational levels and SES of the parents

directly affect the level of performance of an African American man in a doctoral

program (Conley et al., 2013). A child from a well-off background will be able to access

private education, which is believed to be of greater quality, and go on to excel up to graduate school. Lower SES has been linked to poverty and many people often assume it blocks access to education. However, lower SES hardly prevents children from accessing education but does have an impact on their performance. As such, many are unlikely to proceed all the way to graduate school as a result of financial constraints. Nonetheless, the scholarships and other financial aid they receive can trigger their acceleration all the way to graduate school.

Parental Influence

B. Turner (2019) asserted that African American men tend to succeed in their lives primarily as a result of significant levels of self-motivation and parental influence. Additionally, individuals in parental roles often focus on providing access to quality education to their children as a way of preparing them to cope with life and its accompanying challenges, hence improving their lives through education (Conley et al., 2013). According to research findings, a significant number of African American men, specifically those who have loving, affectionate, and supportive relationships with their parents, cope well in adulthood (Conley et al., 2013). Critical factors such as the occupations of their parents as well as their educational levels directly influenced the outcome of their sons' academic performance, in addition to motivating them to further their education and graduate from high school as well as from community college, undergraduate, and graduate schools. Families in which parents lived together resulted in their children making the decision to pursue their education to the highest level possible. Further studies indicated that in as much as the two-parent family structure continues to experience significant transformations, coping with challenges can be very tough for

African American men, including those being brought up in a single parent home. For instance, a father who provides his child with a sense of support and security will be stable psychologically, emotionally, and socially. Furthermore, maternal care for the African American male child plays a significant role in defining future accomplishments. Nonetheless, the parents of African American boys tend to face numerous challenges, some of which are similar to those of single parents in raising their sons.

According to Conley et al. (2013), the rate of single African American fathers and mothers raising their sons alone has soared sharply in recent times. But, even when the family structure of a two-parent home gradually diminished, parents who were directly involved in their children's schooling did everything possible to provide them with the best schooling possible. More importantly, African American men whose hands were held by their "strong mothers" maneuvered through life's barriers with much ease as compared to those who were brought up without any parental care. As such, guardians who adequately prepare their male children to understand the dynamics of race as well as teach them critical techniques for how to implement strategic plans to get themselves out of different stalemates in life and systems of the world empower their sons to overcome barriers, intolerance, and prejudice. Some parents also empower their sons to excel academically, socially, and economically partly as a result of their awareness about racism and racially discriminatory practices in society and the marketplace. Hence, guardians of African American sons must support, instruct, and defend their male children by adopting parenting styles that encourage their sons to become responsible and successful adults.

B. Turner (2019) further mentioned extreme parenting styles such as authoritarian, permissive-indulgent, and uninvolved as being counterproductive given that they have been linked to the demotivation of a child with regard to excelling in education. According to B. Turner's findings, adopting the authoritative style of parenting is critical to guiding a child toward academic excellence, particularly among African American men. Success is apparent as this parenting style provides African American men with more support. B. Turner's respondents asserted that African American parents who used an authoritative style had boys who were motivated in numerous prosocial activities at school, college, and graduate school in addition to bearing greater aspirations across five waves of assessments. Therefore, children from homes with authoritative parents bear a greater chance of attaining higher grades as compared to those whose parents use alternative counterproductive parenting styles such as an authoritarian or permissive parenting style. Regardless of the parenting style, it is the intention and dream of each parent to raise their children into successful and responsible individuals. African American men who experience family stability, love, and discipline have the potential and motivation to study to the highest levels and overcome all the challenges in their graduate schools. The parents of such individuals often place high expectations for both their education and social lives, thus motivating them to go all the way. As such, African American men who enjoy solid parental support and are raised with focused and loving parents tend to record consistency and success in their academic lives.

B. Turner (2019) further pointed out that to excel academically, self-motivation is a critical ingredient that pushes one to pursue a doctoral degree successfully. He asserted

that whenever parents, the education system, and the community embrace and support the educational goals for African American men, these students are empowered to excel in academe as well as equipped with a skill set and the navigational capital to break every barrier in any environment. Ultimately, African American men who triumph over social, economic, and academic challenges experience greater success and point to the competence and effectiveness of parenting style and communication strategies that enabled them to excel academically and evolve into responsible members of society.

Critical Race Theory

In the United States, as well as various parts of the world, CRT is highly applied in the educational realm to access the nature of racial inclusivity of different existing educational programs. Racial disparities are a serious issue as evidenced by the limited number of African Americans in doctoral programs. Consequently, there is a profound difference in the number of African American men with doctorate degrees compared to men from other races. The issue is caused by a wide range of factors, including positive connections with others as well as the financial backgrounds of Black people. The focus in this study was on exploring the perspectives of African American men toward doctoral degrees together with the factors that limited them from pursuing doctoral degrees. The exploration was sufficient in understanding the experiences of Black men in the education realm. The study was designed to examine the elements that prompt African American men to pursue doctorate degrees. The significance of the study is to understand the relationships as well as the behaviors that foster the interest of African American men to pursue doctorate degrees. Therefore, there are various aspects maneuvered through reviewing different pieces of literature.

Education is vital in life, as recognized by most communities. However, the level of education matters in different fields. For example, to acquire higher job positions, the level of education is highly examined before recruitment. There has been a growing trend of embracing higher education among African Americans. Though the numbers are still significantly low, African American men have shown increased interest in doctoral degree achievement. The doctoral degree is a celebratory achievement as very few people in the African American community study to that level (Aud et al., 2012). As a result, African American men who achieve doctoral degree levels are highly appreciated in society.

Different researchers have sought to gain insight regarding the significantly few doctorate degrees among African Americans. McCallum (2017) indicated that the inadequate diversity in institutions of higher learning is a leading cause of there being few PhD holders among African American men. Diversity has been an increasingly compelling subject in institutions of higher education. Scholars have also paid significantly low attention to diversity, making it unclear what factors are involved in recruiting Black students in doctoral studies (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Thus, among other factors, including financial issues, a lack of diversity embracement leads to fewer African Americans enrolling in PhD programs.

There are consequences for the African American community that result from the low enrollment in doctoral studies. For instance, the few postgraduate degrees among African American men are concentrated in fields other than science-related causes (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Some of the impacts of the low level of education among African Americans lead to lagging in security, prosperity, environment, health,

and quality of life. The small representation of the African Americans in higher education is also highly linked to a lack of inclusion in the shaping of knowledge as well as the dissemination of ideas in society. Therefore, although equality enrichment is highly advocated for in society, low doctorate enrollment leads to cultural and ethnic-based issues among the African American community.

Despite gains in the achievement of doctorate degrees among African American men, the numbers are still nominal. According to data reported by the NCES (2004), African American women have been outpacing their male counterparts in number in institutions of higher learning. For instance, enrollment in institutions of higher education among African American women was at 9% whereas male enrollment was at 5%. Upon registration, most of the male students, up to 67%, drop out of undergraduate programs (Conley et al., 2013). As a result, they do not qualify for PhD studies, resulting in extremely few people enrolling in doctorate studies. The number of male African Americans with PhDs has risen over the years for several reasons. Different studies have also been conducted to create an understanding of the factors prompting African American men to earn PhDs.

Isolation

One of the elements that promotes the interest of African Americans toward the acquisition of doctorate degrees is overcoming isolation as well as marginalization. The issue of marginalization has cultivated a culture of negative attitudes toward doctoral degrees among the general African American community (Conley et al., 2013). The primary cause of marginalization is the failure to have representatives in the development of the curriculum. As a result of isolation, African Americans are subjected to an

irrelevant curriculum as well as a hostile academic environment. During their undergraduate studies, the prospects of African American men regarding pursuing further education are often discouraged by insensitive tutors (Strayhorn &Terrel, 2007). When instructors are selective regarding the cultures of minority students, learners are often discouraged from continuing their studies. According to the experience of African American men with PhDs, they somewhat felt a sense of mental inferiority as a result of the lack of people to whom they could relate culturally in the classroom (Conley et al., 2013).

However, efforts to overcome the "inferiority" linked to discrimination and isolation have led to the success of male African American students at the PhD level (Bowen & Rudenstine, 2014). A positive school environment is an excellent means of increasing the number of African American male learners in the United States as well as in other parts of the world (Strayhorn, 2010). According to Bowen and Rudenstine (2014), learners feel secure in a learning institution where teachers are not discriminatory. A sense of belonging promotes comprehension skills among learners and, more importantly, peace of mind while in the learning institution. Academic resilience is required to increase the number of male African American students in postgraduate studies (Titcomb, 2014). If the students had a negative experience, they might not continue with doctoral studies. However, if the students had a learning environment that fostered them positively through cultural embracement, African American learners are likely to pursue higher degrees in education.

Expectations

African American male learners also require competent teachers with profound expectations for their learning. When teachers are of high quality, there is an excellent chance that learners will be successful in their academics. According to Pitre (2014), the caliber of the teacher is highly emulated by the students, supporting the need to ensure teachers are of high quality. The impact of competent teachers is expressed through increased comprehension and understanding of materials learned in the classroom among students. Experienced and diverse teachers will ensure there is equal participation among the students in the school despite their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Teachers are also mentors to African American learners, especially if they embrace their cultural backgrounds efficiently (McCallum, 2017). The skills acquired when students are studying lead to the development of cooperative relationships. Furthermore, academic success is gained by the students, prompting them to continue with their studies.

African American male learners do well in their studies when cultural and social capital are appropriately provided. Social capital is inclusive of the networks that lead to achievement support, social norms, and information. The cultural capital aspect, on the other hand, is acquired from the capacity to solve problems in the external environment to survive. Cultural capital is fostered by the people who arise from the integration, which is internal rather than external integration (Toldson, 2012). Therefore, the learning process should be consistent in terms of behavior, cognition, and emotional considerations. Through cultural and social capital in schools, African American learners are in a better position to predict and also understand events as they occur. As a result, the issue of anxiety among the minority group is diluted in the learning institutions. This

affirms that Black doctoral students also have the ability to compete effectively with availability of resources in different learning institutions. The elimination of capital limitations for Black students is therefore a projected positive improvement that will be investigated in the main research work on whether it will help improve on the numbers. African American leaners, instructors, and peers have been working together to promote cultural and social capital in learning institutions (Shifrer, Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2015). Consequently, the number of male African Americans in doctoral studies is rising slowly compared to previous decades.

Economics

Doctoral studies are profoundly affected by the financial capital of a student. The issue of economic instability among minority groups in the United States and, more importantly, African Americans, has led to insufficient access to education (Singer, 2008). Promoting African American students financially is an excellent way of fostering educational attainment among members of the population. However, the perspective of knowledge among male African American learners is the most significant determinant in the matters of the financial capital (Clark, 2003). According to Bowen and Rudenstine (2014), it is notable that most African Americans hail from low-income families, which may be a limitation in their pursuit of different doctoral programs. Remarkably, the positivity of the learners will lead to the understanding that the success and wealth of the future surpass the cost of acquiring an education. Thus, understanding that the results of receiving a doctoral education are greater than the cost will change the perspectives of African American learners toward higher education. Financial capital in postgraduate studies is highly associated with cultural capital (Titcomb, 2014). Education in society is

highly linked to wealth as well as success. Fostering such a cultural belief will encourage African American learners to acquire doctoral knowledge regardless of the financial hurdles. The current generation of African Americans are working toward changing the culture of illiteracy. As such, young and middle-aged men are continuously investing in gaining a doctoral degree in different universities (Travis & Leech, 2013). The main aim of overlooking the cost of a PhD is to improve the life chances of the entire African American community.

Influence

Influence from a counselor is also necessary for African American male students to continue enrolling in doctoral degree programs. The provision of counselors in schools is an essential strategy that should be provided by all learning institutions. Learners need to understand the necessary information regarding advancement in education (Goto & Martin, 2009). When leaners are enlightened, they develop interest in the various courses offered at the doctoral level in institutions of higher learning. Knowledge of the objectives is vital to foster the attainment of educational goals among African American male learners (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Furthermore, through counseling, learners will understand the expected changes in the environment of higher learning. Provision of advice to learners and family members ensures students are offered the right support while they are pursuing doctorate studies. Coping with the new environment requires emotional support, especially in institutions where cultural diversity is not fully embraced (Travis & Leech, 2013). Therefore, counseling before enrolling in doctorate courses is of great importance to ensure students are optimistic about the courses and their experiences in learning institutions.

Support

Support from family and parents is essential to motivate the pursuit of doctorate degrees among students. Parental involvement is one of the main ways through which the family can support students in higher learning (Strayhorn & Terrel, 2007). The significance of parental involvement in education is to cultivate the educational success of students. There is a need for students to be provided with the required resources to promote the learning process. Parents should follow up on their children's progress in their courses to ensure they are performing as expected (McCallum, 2017). When parents have high expectations for the educational performance of their children, positive perceptions, as well as values, are imparted upon the learners. According to Strayhorn (2008), African American students perform better in their studies with the active participation of their parents. Furthermore, if students are at a particular social or cultural risk, parental engagement creates resilience (Bowen & Rudenstine, 2014). The resilience of students is especially gained through parental understanding and support while the learners are pursuing their higher degrees in various courses. Williams and Bryan (2013) also reinforced the insight by Warde (2014) that there is a need to ensure parents are actively involved in higher learning to protect students' welfare while in school. Therefore, family and parental support among African American students in institutions of higher education is of great importance. Male learners especially require an assurance of protection by their parents to promote the pursuit of doctorate degrees.

Colaizzi's Method

Method

The Colaizzi method helps researchers with phenomenological data analysis as it assists in capturing the aspects of a unified experience with an emphasis on the influence of contextual factors. According to Colaizzi (1978), the elements of phenomenological data analysis include dividing authentic data into units, transforming the units into meanings expressed in phenomenological concepts, and converting the data to offer a description of the experiences. To understand the culture and ethnic research, there is a need to use Colaizzi's method of phenomenological analysis. The technique is especially crucial in understanding the experiences of African American men as doctorate students. The qualitative aspect of the approach is necessary to ensure the perspective of the researcher is somewhat overlooked and the experiences of the participants are instead analyzed. For instance, as a researcher, there was a need to evaluate the causes of the low representation of African Americans in institutions of higher learning. The evaluation was based on the experiences of the students who had already pursued a PhD as well as those who were still in the process of academic attainment. Such an exploration was essential as it was designed to reveal unavailable insights as well as those that have not been covered in different research studies.

The researcher expected that African American male students who had completed their doctorate studies or those who were pursuing a doctoral degree would be open to sharing the factors hindering Blacks from pursuing higher education. The data analysis provided insight into the issues that have remained a stumbling block to African

Americans; thus, policymakers and stakeholders can use the information for the formulation and implementation of appropriate policies in the education sector.

The researcher in this phenomenological study had to transcend or suspend past knowledge and experience to comprehend the phenomenon of why African American students pursuing doctorate studies are fewer at a deeper level. The Colaizzi method establishes bracketing as a procedure of setting aside the beliefs, feelings, and perceptions of individuals so they can welcome the phenomenon. Bracketing required the researcher to suspend judgment regarding the natural world and instead focus on evidence rather than assumptions, opinions, thoughts, and presuppositions concerning the topic of study. Bracketing is useful as it helps eliminate the potential for preconceived understandings to interfere with the analysis of the findings. The data analysis established the need to introduce a conducive environment that will build and maintain the trust for African American PhD students at predominantly White institutions.

Culture

The primary focus in this study was on the main factors that can attract Black students to pursue doctoral degrees. For example, although the doctorate may incur some costs, the perspectives of the learners and their families are what determine whether they will enroll in doctorate courses or not (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007). The cultural belief that associates prosperity with education is one of the drivers of a positive perspective regarding doctorate education. As a result, instead of focusing on the incurred amount, African American men focus on the future prosperity and success associated with the doctorate.

The study also contained a focus on the positivity drawn from the general learning environment and how it may affect Black students' decisions to enroll in doctoral programs. For example, with competent teachers who are also diverse, cultural embracement and equality can be achieved in the classroom. African American male learners, on the other hand, relate to the materials and content taught in the school (Pitre, 2014). The inclusion of the students despite their backgrounds is an element that fosters a thirst for more education. As such, the experience causes them to enroll in doctorate courses.

Colaizzi's method of analyzing the main reason there are few African Americans with doctorate courses was highly applicable in the current study. As there are few African American male learners, there is a need to advocate for strategies that can encourage more Black students to undertake doctoral programs. Such inclusion is essential to overcome the isolation and discrimination felt by Black students in institutions of higher learning. Once Black male PhD holders are involved in academic management, future Black students will no longer be exposed to an irrelevant curriculum (Edward & Welch, 2011). Furthermore, there will be a source of motivation to other students regarding enrolling in doctorate courses. Being taught by tutors who can relate to the students at a cultural level is an essential element of educational success among African Americans (Travis & Leech, 2013).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of African American men who earned doctoral degrees to obtain an understanding of some of the activities implemented by leaders that motivated them to pursue a higher education. The research study was designed to identify factors the participants perceived as barriers as well as those that provided opportunities for success. This study is important because it is well established that those individuals receiving doctoral degrees have additional opportunities to increase their SES beyond that of individuals who have only received undergraduate degrees and even far more than those who have not attended college at all (NCES, 2012). Additionally, individuals with doctoral degrees are apt to become leaders themselves and enhance the SES of others and their families as those who have received college degrees are more likely to see their family members strive to achieve a college education (NCES, 2007b).

Research Design

Though there are many approaches that can be used to investigate and analyze data, the most effective method for gaining the lived experiences of individuals is a qualitative approach using the phenomenological design and process (Forster, 2019). One of the main reasons for using a phenomenological qualitative method is because a vast amount of the literature contains quantitative studies and the current study required looking into the lived experiences of individuals, specifically African American men who have been successful in receiving doctoral degrees. Furthermore, quantitative processes for investigating leadership have not provided significant information to understand how leadership operates in real-world situations nor in situations that actually influence

practice (Klenke, 2016). The preferred qualitative phenomenological method was well

described by Creswell (2014) as he stated:

> Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the research describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants. The description culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. (p. 14)

As the phenomenon was African American men and their representation among

doctoral degree recipients, investigating the lived experiences and actions of African

American men who achieved these degrees was the most realistic method of exploration

and examination. Additionally, Gläser and Laudel (2013) indicated the qualitative

method is an appropriate way to identify "causal mechanisms." To identify why and how

these individuals were successful in pursuing doctoral degrees and the leadership

activities that may have motivated them, a qualitative approach appeared to be a suitable

approach and design for this research study.

In this qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher investigated the

perceptions of the participants using one-on-one interviews. In addition, the researcher

maintained a journal to keep track of any additional information or artifacts introduced

during the investigative procedure such as nonverbal observations and the researcher's

reflections. In-depth descriptions and analyses of the participants' lived experiences and

perceptions revealed their perceptions of the motivational impact, barriers, and other

activities exhibited or performed by leaders that may have had an impact on their

decision and success to attain a doctoral degree.

Research Questions

A qualitative phenomenological research design was used to investigate the

overarching research questions: What are the various activities that might be

implemented by leaders to increase the number of African American men completing doctoral degrees? What types of activities can be implemented to encourage African American men to become more motivated to seek a higher degree and encourage others to do likewise? The selected methodology was intended to yield rich and thick data to help address these important research questions.

Participants

For this study, the sample size was 10 individuals who fit the following criteria: (a) identified as an African American man, (b) attained a doctoral degree, and (c) earned their doctoral degree within the last 15 years. These individuals were interviewed in a one-on-one format via telephone.

Instrumentation

The research instrumentation used for collecting data for this study was individual interviews guided by a few general demographic questions to obtain the characteristics of the sample group (Part I) and a predetermined set of open-ended interview questions (Part II). This method of collecting data enabled the researcher to ask the participants the same questions to ensure consistency. This consistency also allowed for increased reliability while collecting rich and thick data pertaining to the phenomenon (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The two-part instrument can be found in Appendix A. The general demographic items collected were age group, professional field, and doctoral degree type and year completed. The open-ended questions used for the one-on-one interviews were as follows:

1. What were some of the factors that actually motivated you to attend graduate school and to earn a doctoral degree, and in looking back do you think there

were other initiatives that could have provided additional motivation for you during the decision-making process?

2. Were there any specific ethnicity issues, under the control of leadership (socially and professionally), that because of being an African American man may have had a positive or negative impact on your decision to pursue a doctoral degree? If so, would you please elaborate?

3. What activity, legal initiative, or provision provided by school leadership or governmental agency would you say had the greatest impact on you being successful in accomplishing your doctoral degree?

4. What educational institutional resources did you find most effective when trying to attain your doctoral degree that leaders should be aware of for future consideration?

5. What are some of the challenges you would inform leadership to be concerned with when trying to motivate African American men to pursue a doctoral degree?

6. Were there any specific support groups, special activities, or other types of motivational activities that influenced you to pursue and earn a doctoral degree? If yes, please share some of this information.

7. What activities or barriers under leadership control do you perceive might have the largest negative impact on African American men achieving doctoral degrees?

8. From your lived experience, what types of activities do you think leaders might implement to increase the number of African American men who would pursue and complete doctoral degrees?

9. From your experience, are there any other perceptions or ideas you would like to share that you think leaders should be aware of when trying to encourage African American men to pursue and succeed in obtaining a doctoral degree? If yes, please share your observations and ideas.

Data Collection

Upon receiving approval from the dissertation committee and Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher employed the purposive sampling method to invite and select individuals from the researcher's personal network of professionals using personal contact information. To achieve the required sample size, the snowball sampling method was also used during which participants were asked to make referrals of others from their own personal professional networks who met the selection criteria. No invitations or any contact related to this study were issued using the communication channels of the potential participants' places of employment. No participants were interviewed in their places of employment unless they had the personal authority to do so based on their position within their organizations. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the interview process to record and collect any additional information offered. The one-on-one interviews and the researcher's maintenance of a journal provided for triangulation of the data, which added to the validity of the study.

Procedures

After identifying potential participants using the established selection criteria (i.e.,

identified as an African American man, obtained a doctoral degree, and obtained a

doctoral degree within the past 15 years), the researcher reached out to these individuals

with an invitation to participate in the study. Invitations were issued personally or

through personal email using the script/message template found in Appendix B. This

message provided information regarding the study's title, purpose, participation criteria,

and participants' right to privacy and confidentiality. No study related communications

were done using any of the communication channels at the potential participants' places

of employment.

Those individuals who expressed interest and agreed to participate in this study

were provided with a copy of the informed consent letter (see Appendix C). The

researcher was available to review and answer any questions pertaining to their rights as a

participant, how their information would be used, and their privacy and confidentiality as

outlined in the letter of informed consent.

When individuals signed and returned to the researcher their consent forms, a date

and time were established for a one-on-one interview. The researcher ensured the

interviews occurred in a setting that was at the convenience and comfort level of the

participants, and took precautions to protect the privacy of the participants and their

information. The researcher ensured that as she conducted all interviews over the

telephone, she was doing so at a private location behind closed doors and requested that

the participant do the same on his end. Whether participants chose to do so was at their

prerogative as the researcher did her due diligence through informed consent and verbal request.

The interviews occurred during a 2- to 3-week period to keep the narrative fresh and current. The interviews were audio recorded and then later transcribed by the researcher. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher asked for participants' oral consent again as a reminder of their rights.

Validity

The validity of the data was an important focus of the researcher to ensure clarity and quality of transferable outcomes. Preventing the intervention of any type of researcher bias was an ongoing concern. The researcher remained aware of the importance of understanding subjectivity in a qualitative study. Though the researcher was of a different gender than the reference group being investigated, because the researcher was also African American, the possibility of reflexivity still needed to be considered. Because there are so many ways the researcher could affect the study through data collection and analysis, being aware of reflexivity is very important (Creswell, 2012). The researcher did so through the use of the reflexive journal during data collection.

Data Analysis

Once the interviews were completed and all data were collected, the analysis began. To ensure reliable procedures, the Moustakas approach was used to identify when personal interest was encouraged by the momentum for phenomenological inquiry (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, using the Moustakas approach to data analysis provided the researcher with a structure and process to follow during qualitative data analysis.

During this preparatory process, data are usually coded, classified, and categorized. Though there are several steps in analyzing qualitative data, they still need to go through the process of coding. Coding is one of the most significant steps in making sense of textual data (Basit, 2003).

Coding is an integral part of organizing qualitative data and can be defined as reducing the data down to segments and then giving the segments names (Creswell, 2012). The codes then become a core element to the qualitative study as they can be used and combined to create themes and summaries (Creswell, 2012). This is a central function of the organization of data. Once codes are created, they can then be organized. Once a main category is created or open coded (Creswell, 2012), smaller codes and categories can stem from this main coding through a process known as axial coding (Creswell, 2012).

Coding is an important component of organizing and sorting qualitative data because asking open-ended questions provides researchers with more insight than simply having numerical data. Coding is necessary with open-ended questions because they yield numerous responses. Hence, coding becomes helpful in labeling and organizing the collected qualitative data to identify different themes and the relationships between them (Creswell, 2012).

Colaizzi's method is a seven-step process for descriptive phenomenological data analysis that uses a method to extract, organize, and analyze a narrative dataset (Emami Sigaroudi, Ghiyasvandian, & Nikbakht Nasabadi, 2016). The technique was a great support to the information acquired from reviewing different works of literature (Edward & Welch, 2011). The method is both robust and rigorous as it investigates beyond the

perspective of the researcher. As a result, the data presented and the conclusions, which are drawn upon the completion of the research, are both reliable and credible (Wirihana et al., 2018). The method also creates an opportunity to offer precise information and logic.

The phenomenological method enables the researcher to ask open-ended questions to participants and analyze the data to identify emerging themes. For example, the barriers to access a doctorate create insights about the absent factors that promote access to PhD education among male African American students. Furthermore, the factors that encourage accessibility of education are a significant theme that shows the strengths of African American communities. The ideas are necessary to identify the available gaps in knowledge among the male African American community.

Ethics and Confidentiality

The informed consent letter/form (Appendix C) was provided to the participants and each participant was required to read and sign an informed consent form in order to participate in the study. No interviews were conducted without a signed consent form. The information in the informed consent form made it clear to each participant that the process was strictly voluntary and that at any point during the process they could terminate their participation without explanation and without fear of their relationship with the researcher being negatively affected. They were informed that their responses and perceptions would be private and confidential as no personal identifiers would be recorded. Only codes and aliases were used to keep track of transcripts from the interviews. The study's write up and reporting only used participant codes or aliases. No names or other individual identifiers were used to protect the identities of participants. In

addition, all research data, files, recordings, notes, dates, and times are saved

electronically in the researcher's computer under a special password known to only the

researcher to control access. The researcher is the only one with access to this material

and the material will be secured and safeguarded for a period of 3 years following the

completion of the study; after this period passes, all study related materials will be

destroyed and purged from the computer.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this chapter, the researcher describes the qualitative analysis of the data, including practical steps involved in the analysis. In the analysis phase, the researcher analyzed the data into themes, which are described individually. The researcher also conveys how the themes overlap. The phenomenological data analysis was conducted using Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step process. Colaizzi's strategy illuminated the data by helping to formulate significant statements and themes.

Restatement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of African American men who earned doctoral degrees to obtain an understanding of some of the activities implemented by leaders that motivated them to pursue a higher education. The goal was to gather in-depth information to assist and inform professional and community leadership of the practices and strategies they can use to motivate African American men in their pursuit of doctoral degrees through gaining a better understanding of this population and their needs. The findings from this study are presented in this chapter in individual participant profiles. The significant themes that emerged from the data collection are presented with supporting quotes from the interviews. The two research questions addressed within this study were:

1. What are the various activities that might be implemented by leaders to increase the completion rates of African Americans men receiving doctoral degrees?

2. What types of activities can be implemented to encourage African American men to become more motivated to seek a higher degree and encourage others to do likewise?

Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process entailed conducting an analytical procedure of the data collected and transcripts being summarized as follows. Telephone interviews were conducted using questions that were pre-approved by the IRB. There were nine questions for participants to answer freely and share their experiences using their own words. Each interview lasted from 40 to 45 minutes. The level of data saturation was determined by the researcher. Ten participants were a part of the study. The transcriptions were double checked by the researcher (Colaizzi, 1978).

The following steps represent Colaizzi's process for phenomenological data analysis (Sanders, 2003; Speziale & Carpenter, 2007):

1. All participant transcripts were read and then re-read to obtain a general consensus about the content.

2. For each transcript, the analytical process enabled the researcher to take a more linear look and capture significant statements that pertained to the phenomenon. These statements were written down on a separate sheet of paper noting page and line numbers.

3. Meanings were formulated from these significant statements.

4. The formulated meanings were then sorted into patterns, clusters of themes, and themes.

5. The findings were joined into exhaustive descriptions of the phenomenon under study.

6. The fundamental structure of the phenomenon was described.

7. Validation of the findings was sought from the research participants to compare the researcher's descriptive results with their experiences.

Demographics

Ten African American men participated in this study (see Table 1). All had graduated with a doctoral degree within the last 15 years. Six participants earned a Doctor of Education (EdD), two participants earned a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), one participant earned a Juris Doctorate (JD), and one participant earned a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Half of the participants were between the ages of 31 and 50 and the other half were between the ages of 51 and 65. A commonality was that over half of the participants were either former or active members of the military. The current professional field for the participants was divided in to four categories: (a) educator, (b) ministry, (c) social work, and (d) technology/science. One participant held the position of an engineer, five were educators, two were ministers, one participant was employed in technology sales, and one participant was employed within the social work field.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Participant identifier	Age	Professional field	Degree	Major	Graduation date	Military member
1	51-65	Educator	EdD	Organizational leadership	2019	No
2	51-65	Educator	EdD	Organizational leadership	2017	Yes
3	31-40	Technology	DBA	Information technology	2017	Yes
4	41-50	Social worker	EdD	Organizational leadership	2019	No
5	51-65	Educator	EdD	Counseling & psychology	2018	Yes
6	51-65	Educator	EdD	Organizational leadership	2015	Yes
7	31-40	Engineer	PhD	Industrial engineering	2009	No
8	31-40	Minister	JD	Law	2014	Yes
9	31-40	Minister	DBA	Leadership	2017	Yes
10	51-65	Educator	EdD	Leadership	2016	Yes

Individual Participant Profiles

The following are descriptions of the 10 men who participated in the study and the main themes that echoed from their interviews. All 10 participants had graduated with doctoral degrees. Each participant was assigned an alias by the researcher.

Participant 1 was between the ages of 51 and 65 and received his EdD with an emphasis in organizational leadership in 2019. Participant 1 was an educator in an inner-city school system and worked directly with African Americans. He also started a program that was helping add to the research about African American studies. He was inspired while getting his master's degree by a conversation with a member of the faculty, after which he decided to pursue his doctorate in education. Participant 1 described his mentor as "a leader that cared." The relationship between Participant 1 and

this faculty member provided support and guidance academically, personally, and professionally, which ultimately led to his success during his doctoral pursuit.

Participant 2 was between the ages of 51 and 65 and received his EdD with an emphasis in organizational leadership in 2017. Participant 2 was an educator and retired military member. His education was financed by the GI Bill that is funded by the U.S. government. He was inspired to complete his doctoral degree to set an example for his children. Participant 2 stated, "Family is first and I have to set an example for my family." Participant 2 was the first in his family to earn a doctoral degree. He believed knowledge is power, but more importantly, "applied knowledge is power," and he vowed daily to instill this idea in his students and children. Setting an example for those he felt he mentored from afar was important to Participant 2 as well. He stated, "You never know who is watching, as an African American man you always have to behave as a mentor." Participant 2 was a part of a cohort (group of students) of African American men who were also pursuing a doctoral degree. Participant 2 was happy to be a part of the cohort and said the experience was very helpful and kept him motivated throughout the process. His cohort was a safe space for him to vent, which at times in his opinion was a means of "therapy."

Participant 3 was between the ages of 31 and 40 and received his DBA with an emphasis in information technology in 2017. He currently worked in technology sales and was a member of the military. His education was financed by the GI Bill that is funded by the U.S. government. Participant 3 was also the first in his family to earn a doctoral degree. He felt he needed to fulfill an obligation to his children by becoming a doctor. Participant 3 had always had a passion to do something different, stating, "The

world sees Black men as only athletes or musicians, and quite frankly there are more Black doctors in the world than there are Black musicians and Black athletes." This self-imposed passion pushed Participant 3 to pursue a doctoral degree even more aggressively.

Participant 4 was between the ages of 31 and 40 and received his EdD with an emphasis in organizational leadership in 2019. He was in the field of social work. He was inspired by a faculty member in his undergraduate degree journey. The leadership was profound during his doctoral process. He stated, "My chair was amazing and pushed me to do well." He also had a great support system through his relationship with his best friend who was also pursuing his doctoral degree. Participant 4 was very clear that "it was imperative that I prayed throughout this process." Also, he saw being an example for other African Americans as very important.

Participant 5 was between the ages of 51 and 65 and received his EdD with an emphasis in counseling and psychology in 2018. He was in education within the training and development field and a member of the military. His education was financed by the GI Bill that is funded by the U.S. government. He was inspired by an "auspicious network of people," he was in ministry, and in his thought process, "holding a doctoral degree enhances my credentials as a minister." Participant 5 found solace in prayer time during his doctoral process. Also, he was inspired while working within his cohort of African Americans to do his best in his doctoral program. He stated, "The cohort provided support for us and by us."

Participant 6 was between the ages of 51 and 65 and received his EdD with an emphasis in organizational leadership in 2015. He was an educator and retired from the

military. His education was financed by the GI Bill that is funded by the U.S. government. He was inspired by family and stated, "My grandmother and Dr. Martin Luther King motivated me, my grandmother always spoke highly of education." Participant 6 spoke of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 always being at the forefront of why he wanted to pursue his doctoral degree. He stated, "The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made a way for me to become educationally whole." Participant 6 was passionate about teaching African Americans at the elementary level, as he believed education at an early age is imperative. Participant 6 stated, "African Americans need to keep kicking doors down, and always set an example."

Participant 7 was between the ages of 31 and 40 and received his PhD with an emphasis in engineering in 2009. He was an industrial engineer. He was the second person in his family to graduate with a doctoral degree. He was motivated by family and was the only African American man in his doctoral program. Participant 7 stated, "Often times I felt like the class looked to me to represent the entire African American race." Participant 7 grew up in a multiracial home, which in his opinion prepared him for often being the only African American man in the room. Participant 7 was recruited by the McKnight Fellowship program for engineers and the program provided financial support for his entire doctoral journey. The leadership and mentors within that program placed great emphasis on grooming the students in the program to become great engineers. Participant 7 described the process of completing a PhD in engineering as "brutal and you will come out with scars, but those scars will help you in life." Participant 7 felt there was a greater need for African American male mentors than ever, stating, "African Americans need a spark ignited to attract them towards Science, Technology, and STEM."

Participant 7 was on a quest to help ignite that fire. He had set an example by receiving the Black Engineer of the Year in 2019.

Participant 8 was between the ages of 31 and 40 and received his JD in 2014. He currently was a minister in the military. His education was financed by the GI Bill that is funded by the U.S. government. Participant 8 was inspired to pursue his doctorate degree by the future family he aspired to have one day. Participant 8 was a true believer that education is the key to success. He stated, "A Juris Doctorate gives me a seat at the table and allows me to order what I want." This was the analogy he used to describe having access to a number of things in life via an education. Participant 8 stated, "Leadership had no role in my success as a doctoral student." He received minimal support from the Black Student Association. His church, his faith, and the people from his church were the most motivating during his process of obtaining a doctoral degree. He stated, "A lot of times we don't know, what we don't know," and with that being said, he believed people really did not know how to support him or understand why he was on this journey. Participant 8 was a firm believer in educating African American men starting at the elementary level and providing them with mentors who look like them. Participant 8 believed this would assist them if they chose to pursue a doctoral degree.

Participant 9 was between the ages of 31 and 40 and received his DBA with an emphasis in leadership in 2017. He was an educator and a minister. He was a firm believer in God and stated, "A pastor in Chicago said to me that I would be a doctor one day." He was very serious about fulfilling that prophecy, and therefore he enrolled in school to complete his doctorate. Participant 9 was met with adversity but had a very strong personality and stated, "My teachers were not used to a student having an opinion

I guess." The backlash of all this resulted in Participant 9 being kicked out of school three times during his doctoral journey. Eventually, Participant 9 was proactive and discussed his issues with the president of the university and was able to complete his doctoral degree. Leadership was not an asset to his process, in his personal opinion. Participant 9 believed his faith in God allowed him to finish his doctoral degree.

Participant 10 was between the age of 51 and 65 and received his EdD with an emphasis in organizational leadership in 2016. He was an educator and retired member of the military. His education was financed by the GI Bill funded by the U.S. government. Participant 10 had been an established educator and businessman for a number of years before he was inspired to pursue a doctoral degree. Participant 10 stated, "I was already successful and had my mind set on continuing to educate people about leadership, but this degree will help me become more impactful." Before he took a step in the direction of pursuing this rigorous degree, he consulted with his close network of friends about enrolling in a higher education institution. He stated, "My network of friends were very supportive and made me aware that they would hold me accountable." Participant 10 had joined a cohort of African American men who were in the doctoral program at the university he attended, and in that cohort Participant 10 stated, "We were our brother's keeper."

Coding

Five themes were discovered during the process of data analysis. Transcribed recordings were used to capture pertinent information from the participants as a means to ensure consistency within the themes captured. All of the questions asked required the participants to contribute their own personal experiences and perceptions regarding

leadership activities, effective coping mechanisms, and suggestions for how future leadership and community leaders can lead African American male doctoral degree students. Bergin (2011) noted, "The analysis of interview data requires the selection of a coding system, which helps the researcher to organize themes accordingly" (p. 8).

Identified patterns, trends and themes were separated and noted, as discussed earlier in Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis process. The narratives of the participants were reviewed for connections between the themes, and related themes were merged into clusters to establish and categorize each participant's transcript. The coding system provided assistance in identifying key words that formed recurrent themes. Themes emerged from the researcher reading over each answer the participants provided and establishing connections. An outline was created for every theme identified. Themes were recognized and reviewed to ensure they had a direct connection to the research topic. All of the transcripts were assessed via the same coding process and the material supported the researcher in evaluating the documents. There were a number of similarities in the transcriptions and it was important for the researcher to review the documents to confirm the context was precise with usage. Colaizzi's method of data analysis ensured the credibility and reliability of the results. The method allowed the researcher to use a descriptive phenomenological approach that garnered a clear and logical process through which the fundamental structure of African American men's lived experiences could be explored (Colaizzi, 1978).

Emergent Themes

The five themes that emerged to reflect the experiences of 10 African American men who had completed a doctoral degree were (a) impact of self-established cohorts, (b)

impact of mentors and the military, (c) impact of family, (d) impact of spirituality, and (e)

impact of a lack of leadership (see Figure 1). In reviewing the research, important words

such as "family," "cohorts," and "lack of leadership" were used often as well as the

mention of the mentoring program Black Student Association.
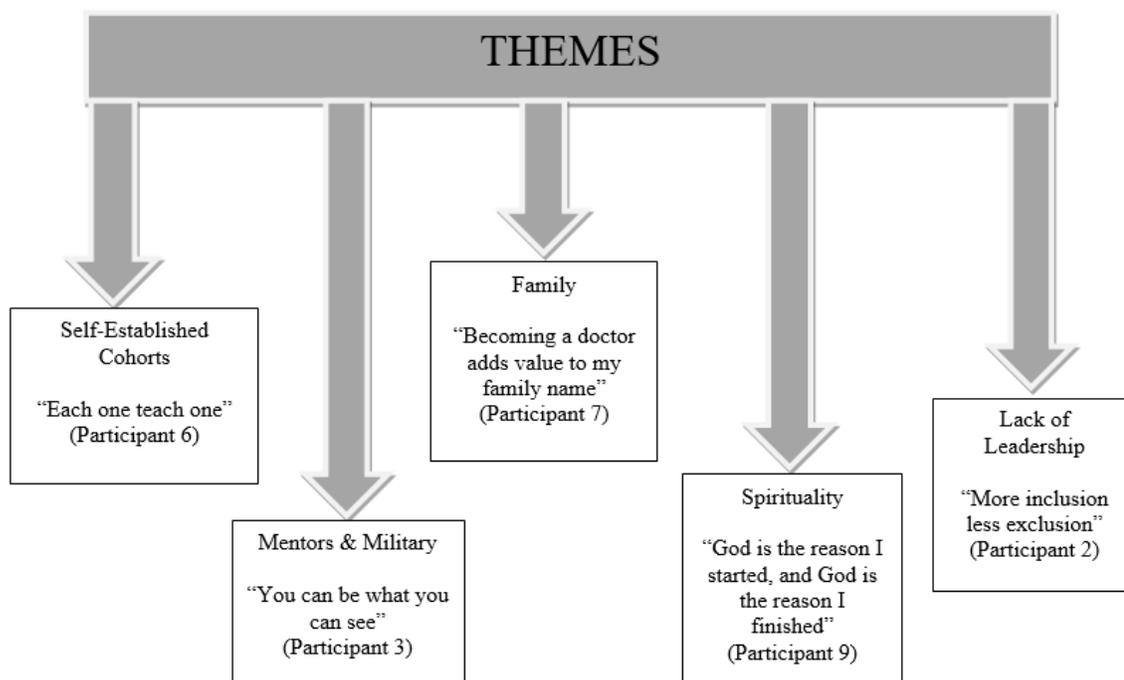
Figure 1. Theme analysis.

Impact of Self-Established Cohorts

Self-established cohorts were created by the African American men and their

peers as a means to support each other during the doctoral process. This theme was

discussed by four of the participants who were part of a self-established cohort while

pursuing their doctoral degrees. This theme was supported by the research mentioned in

Chapter 2; Titcomb (2014) stated a sense of belonging promotes comprehension skills

among learners, and, more importantly, peace of mind while in the learning institution.

Academic resilience is required to increase the number of male African American

students enrolled in postgraduate studies. Participant 5 stated "my entire cohort took the

same courses at the same time and took the comp exam and completed our final defense around the same time, and within my cohort we encouraged each other and held each other accountable."

Participant 2 and his peers established a cohort and intended to take each class together as they believed they were stronger together. Participant 2 stated, "The road to a doctoral degree can be a lonely one; therefore, establishing cohorts kept us focused and gave us a feeling of team." Participant 2 was very direct in saying, "As African Americans we are stronger together than apart."

This strategy was helpful and allowed the group to grow successfully. The cohort that was established by Participant 4 was not planned but happened by accident. Participant 4 stated:

> My best friend just happened to be pursuing a doctorate at the same time, which made us establish a spontaneous cohort, that we started to take time out to study together on a weekly bases, and other African Americans within the doctoral program just started to join in with us.

Although the cohort was spontaneous, Participant 4 expressed "our cohort was needed and made everyone support each other." Researchers have declared that a positive school environment is an excellent means of increasing the number of African American male learners in the United States as well as in other parts of the world (Strayhorn, 2010). Participant 3 shared:

> Being a part of my cohort gave me a sense of belonging, during a difficult time and being able to connect with someone who looked like me and was going through the same thing that I was experiencing was amazing.

This theme indicated these African American men had the autonomy of establishing a group of their peers who were on a similar doctoral journey. This theme has not been noted in a significant amount of research. The self-established cohorts were

a commonality among participants. Everyone in the self-established cohorts knew they needed to earn a doctorate degree to achieve their career goals, and a doctorate degree would enable them to achieve different goals in life. Participant 5 insisted that the following quote be included in the findings: "Freedom comes in letters AA, BA, MBA, and PhD, having these letters behind our name as African American men keeps us on course in life." Many of the African American men echoed this in saying, "We were stronger together our programs."

Impact of Mentors and the Military

Recent literature supports that the current generation of African Americans is working toward changing the culture of illiteracy. Travis and Leech (2013) shared that young and middle-aged men are continuously investing in gaining a doctoral degree. A number of the participants in the current study had a mentor who happened to be African American. The commonality in having some form of guidance often resurfaced. Participant 6 spoke of the mentor he found within an African American male professor, stating, "My chair was a stern but direct man that took me under his wing and held me accountable for completing my task within my program." Participant 4 had a great African American female mentor and described her as follows:

> My mentor was instrumental in my decision to pursue a doctoral degree, she made sure that during her final defense, I was present and allowed me to witness the process of her pursuing her doctoral degree, so that I would be ready when it was my turn.

Participant 1 stated, "Now that I have finished my doctoral degree, I realized that my mentor was my professor who was a positive voice that pushed me and introduced me to the doctoral degree program." Participant 1 had just finished his master's degree program

when his mentor presented him with a new journey to become a doctor. Participant 1 stated:

> I had a lot of ideas about African American studies and I knew what I wanted to study, my mentor explained to me what better way of getting my ideas out on paper while pursuing my doctorate in education.

McCallum (2017) stated teachers are also mentors to African American learners especially if they embrace a student's cultural background efficiently.

Having positive relationships that started in the military and possessing a disciplined lifestyle resonated throughout six of the 10 African American men's narratives. Participant 8 shed light on the fact that the military somewhat prepared him for obtaining his JD, as he learned to practice self-discipline in the military, which transferred to his doctoral journey. Participant 8 stated, "Not only did I have to dig and remember my self-discipline, I had to remember that I embodied the discipline that allowed to be an active member of the United States military." Participant 6 shared:

> Being a African American military man presented me with a number of challenges, such as adjusting my attitude to the circumstances in front of me, that also has helped in being an African American doctor, a number of times I have had to shut my mouth because I have to respect leadership.

Participant 6 stated the U.S. military afforded him the ability financially to become a doctor. Participant 2 stated, "The military helped me to navigate and reach in life and grab what I want, and that's exactly what I did during my doctoral process, I reached in and grabbed it."

Most of the participants stated they would have liked to have found a mentor within leadership within the higher education institution to help incubate research projects and network with once their doctoral programs was completed; unfortunately, mentors were found in the military or outside the institution. This finding supports that

African American men need to have more rich mentorships with faculty and it would be ideal if the mentor was an African American member of the leadership team. An important element in understanding how to increase African American men's representation in doctoral programs would be to have plans in place to keep African American men engaged once they become established in their doctoral program. Leadership needs to know that having African American faculty in graduate programs would be a great asset in terms of retaining doctoral students. According to Muñoz-Dunbar and Stanton (1999), the presence of minority faculty members in graduate programs is significant because these faculty members can provide support in intimidating situations.

A fair number of participants were a part of the military and were either currently retired or active, and their membership in the military enabled them to afford school through the GI Bill funded by the U.S. government. The discipline to get through the rigorous process that a doctoral program entails also came from their military service. Participant 6 stated, "Being a part of the military gave me the attitude that quitting the program was not an option, despite the hurdles that presented themselves throughout my doctoral journey, it was essential that I finish what I started."

Impact of Family

The significance of family was a theme represented in the interviews with all 10 participants, as they spoke of family initially during the process of deciding to pursue a doctoral degree. Each African American male participant mentioned some form of family support and described a number of reasons that pursuing a doctoral degree was important.

A combination of support systems in their families and friends promoted persistence among each participant.

Participant 4 described a strong family support system as a pillar to his success. He acknowledged:

> Sometimes my family didn't understand the process or details about the doctoral program journey, but what they did understand was to always share a positive word with me about how proud they were, that I was doing something that no one in my blood line had ever accomplished.

Participant 2 shared:

> I had the honor of sharing this doctoral degree process with my lovely wife, myself and my wife worked on our doctoral degrees at the exact same time, so the support system was all too real for the both of us.

A combination of family and friend support resonated throughout the narratives of the participants. This emergent theme showed that more often than not, family, and specifically children, was the key motivating factor that not only encouraged these African American men to pursue their doctoral degree, but kept them motivated throughout the process and helped them cope in the difficult times. Family being at the forefront of a number of the answers by participants resonated because the participants took great pride in being fathers and leading by example to teach their children how important education is by continuing their education. Also, a number of the participants made it a point to express how involved they were in their children's lives. "According to a study by the Centers for Disease Control (2018), Black fathers were the most involved with children no matter if they lived with them or not" (Scott, 2018, para. 1). Participant 10 noted, "My family and children continues to keep me on my toes, and constantly push me to keep creating the best version of myself, to not only make them proud, but to make

my race as whole shine." Some other participant quotes to support this theme were as

follows:

> My family was vital in making the choice to go back to school, I really wanted them to see me accomplish this great goal of becoming a doctor. (Participant 10)

> I am one of two doctors in my family, and it was important for me to not only become a doctor, but to allow my small children to see their father walk across the stage. (Participant 7)

> I am doing this for my family name, I am the first in my family to become a doctor and my family was in full support of that. (Participant 6)

Impact of Spirituality

All 10 participants had their own versions of a spiritual power and practices of

prayer throughout their doctoral journey that they tapped into at any given time. Over

half of the participants accredited their success to God for allowing them to prepare and

finish their doctorate. Participant 9 shared, "God is the only reason I pursued my

doctorate, I was on a spiritual journey at the time and God sent a pastor to tell me I will

become a doctor." Participant 6 stated, "I have to give glory to God for allowing me the

opportunity to have become a doctor, it is only through the grace of God that I made it

through the process." Participant 8 declared, "If it was not for God and my church

community praying for me and supporting me and keeping a positive upbeat gospel song

on my radio it would have been a different story for me during my doctoral journey."

Participant 4 had great admiration for God throughout his doctoral journey, affirming:

> I think I had the best prayer group in the world. They were flexible and understanding if I needed prayer or needed to pray at any time, they would make themselves available. I wouldn't have made it without my prayer team and God on my side.

Having a healthy spiritual life effectively helped these African American men

throughout their doctoral journeys. The theme resonated when the participants spoke

about challenging times in their doctoral programs. Prayer groups and prayer time were methods the participants used to reduce stress and clear their minds. At the center of all the participants' conversations was a spiritual component that continued to surface when they would begin to talk through the decision-making process of pursuing a doctoral degree. More often than not the conversation would turn to God or prayer and how the decision was ultimately something they prayed about. Many scholars have noted spirituality is an inherent and central aspect of African American culture (Armstrong & Crowther, 2002). Findings support that African American men have a grand idea about holiness and take a grave interest in God and prayer.

Impact of a Lack of Leadership

The lack of a relationship with leadership throughout the doctoral process was a theme echoed by six participants. These men consistently made reference that there was minimal support from leadership and a lack of supportive instructors who would take the time to get to know them and provide them with opportunities to grow as students and professionals. Research has directly indicated the lack of leadership. Consequently, African American men with PhDs often times feel a sense of mental inferiority as a result of the lack of people to whom they can relate culturally in the classroom (Conley et al., 2013). Participant 10 shared:

> I had a professor that only wanted me to speak when spoken to, and not share my thoughts. . . . Often times when I shared my opinion he would become combative.
> . . . I am a successful businessman and I have a passion for leadership models, I would almost always have to interject if a subject was not explained at great length. . . . A number of times the professor would quickly go over profound information such as the Myers-Briggs instrument, and I would raise my hand and ask him to go more in-depth.

Through this quote it becomes clear that Participant 10 believed leadership should involve empowering students.

Participant 9 recalled one professor who was not as friendly and would not take the time to get to know any of the African American students in the class, but often asked other students about their personal goals and aspirations. Participant 9 stated, "This professor treated the African Americans in the class like we were his students but treated others as if they were his colleagues." As a result of the amount of attention the professor paid to other students and not to African American students, Participant 9 stated, "I made it a point to never take any classes he taught."

Participant 1 felt it should have been important to the leadership at his institution to support African Americans who were contemplating or pursuing any level of education. He said he never experienced any support from leadership and nothing was created to recruit or support African Americans on campus. Participant 1 shared, "There should have been some form of encouragement or offering of groups to support us throughout our marathon to our doctoral degree, and leadership at my institution never provided that support."

Participant 2 gave much gratitude to his dissertation chair, stating, "My chair was a star in a dark place." Having a positive relationship with his dissertation chair was an essential factor in his success, because outside of that relationship, Participant 2 stated, "My advisor was unresponsive and not really helpful, and when I reached out to upper leadership the same unresponsiveness was repeated."

Summary

The objective of the interview questions was to understand the participants' perspectives regarding their experiences as African American men in doctoral programs and to provide valued suggestions that will benefit current and future community leaders

and professionals. An additional objective was to provide a roadmap for African American men who may be considering pursuing a doctoral degree. The process for collecting data involved semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to acquire an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Based on the answers given by the African American men, five themes emerged. Every theme highlighted the lived experiences of these African American men related to the phenomenon of being an African American man having gone through the journey of obtaining a doctoral degree. Findings were consistent with CRT and opened up new possibilities for future research. Past studies using CRT have shown African Americans lack resources and are faced with inequities in society (Cintrón, 2010). Research conducted on the topic of the negative experiences African Americans have experienced while pursuing a doctorate degree has possibly discouraged other African Americans from pursuing a related path. Almost every participant spoke to this in their responses about leadership being culturally incompetent by not having more diversity and inclusion at their institutions of higher education. Participant 2 echoed the response from many of the participants by declaring, "The playing field is not leveled, and has not been for a long time at universities regarding leadership being readily available for African American men." Dixson and Rosseau (2007) declared the significance of using representative voices of underrepresented groups to learn about meaningful experiences regarding education within their communities.

Chapter 4 presented a number of common themes but the feedback about leadership and the lack thereof at higher education institutions was naturally the topic of each interview. These 10 African American men in general had the mindset that for

themselves and their community, more consideration should be given to African American men in higher education institutions. These men often mentioned in their interviews that leadership needs to include input from African American men when planning and developing programs and activities to meet their needs. The feeling of isolation and the racially impactful incidents conveyed that participants were singled out because their race, as often times members of leadership were unresponsive or were opposed to what these men had to offer in the classroom setting. In addition, the universities they attended never had any feeling of community. This lack of community on a number of campuses pushed the participants to establish their own cohorts to ensure other students of their race would do well in their doctoral journeys. The overall consensus from these African American men was that accommodations from leadership at the beginning of their doctoral process were lackluster to say the least. The participants had the overall feeling that there could have been a more profound presence of African American male faculty, especially regarding advisors. The participants expressed the feeling that having more African American men or women in leadership at these higher education institutions would level the playing field when problems and concerns surfaced. If the leadership at higher education institutions would employ more African American faculty and advisors, African American students could have someone on campus with whom they could identify when facing difficult circumstances.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The researcher in this study used the Colaizzi (1978) method to conduct a phenomenological qualitative analysis of the lived experiences of African American men who earned doctoral degrees. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to gather data relating to African American men's graduate experiences and specifically their interactions with leadership. In the interview process, nine questions were asked related to the events, behaviors, and attitudes of each participant regarding his doctoral journey. Each participant contributed to the development of the emerging themes of (a) impact of self-established cohorts, (b) impact of mentors and the military, (c) impact of family, (d) impact of spirituality, and (e) impact of a lack of leadership.

Of the responses obtained from the participants, there was consensus on a lack of leadership within their higher education institutions. Improvements to address the lack of leadership in these institutions included a greater presence of African Americans in leadership to ensure faculty and advisors are more culturally diverse.

Discussion and Explanation of Findings

A number of answers surfaced to the question regarding the various activities that might be implemented by leaders to increase the completion rates of African American men receiving doctoral degrees. Based on the responses from many of the participants, suggestions surfaced of activities leaders can implement to inspire African American men to become more motivated to seek a higher degree and encourage others to do the same.

Five themes emerged during the interview process that contributed to the participants remaining motivated during their doctoral programs and what activities could have been implemented by leadership. Participants also provided suggestions that

leadership can implement to encourage African American male students in the process of pursuing a doctoral degree. A qualitative, phenomenological study using semi-structured interviews was implemented to examine two research questions related to this purpose. Creswell (2012) stated that by engaging in discussion with participants in a natural setting, qualitative research provides a comprehensive understanding and rich contextual data.

Review of the Study

The literature revealed that a vast number of individuals receive doctoral degrees but there remains a shortage of representation by African American men (McGaskey, Freeman, Guyton, Richmond, & Guyton, 2016). The premise is that an increased presence of leadership may help increase the number of African American men who graduate from doctoral programs, and based on the responses from many of the participants in the current study, there are activities leaders can implement to inspire African American men to become more motivated to seek a higher degree and encourage others to do likewise. The presence of African American men on campus may result in African American men feeling more comfortable with applying. The larger the presence of African American men at an institution of higher education, the greater the chance for other African American men to be in leadership at institutions of higher education. The presence of African American men in leadership can potentially enhance the recruitment and retention of both graduate and undergraduate students as well as increase the pool of mentors for African American men. The researcher derived this theme by grouping the common stories and experiences shared by the participants. Dixson and Rosseau (2007)

declared the significance of using representative voices of underrepresented groups to learn about meaningful experiences regarding education within their communities.

Research Question 1

What are the various activities that might be implemented by leaders to increase the number of African American men completing doctoral degrees?

The findings of this qualitative research showed that the need for mentors is vital. According to the participants, having African American mentors who actively work with students during the doctoral process would be beneficial to this population. In addition, there is a need for diversity inclusive activities on college campuses that showcase African American men who are accomplishing their goals (e.g., meet and greets on campus where leadership is present and involved). Leaders of institutions of higher education also need to recruit more African American men to serve as faculty. For example, the human resources department of higher education institutions should implement marketing job opportunities at more urban events such as the Black Women's Expo or Historically Black Colleges and Universities job fairs, where master's degree candidates for graduation will be available and ready to teach and take on potential leadership roles in future. Also, they could host a virtual hiring event for African American male faculty to apply and interview on the Internet. Byrd et al. (2010) shared that data exist about minority students responding to role models who share specific characteristics with them and who can identify with personal aspects that encompass their experiences (p. 131). The research has shown inadequate diversity in institutions of higher education is a leading cause of there being a lower number of PhD holders among African American men (McCallum, 2017).

Activities exclusively developed by leadership to meet the needs of African

American men in doctoral degree programs can include providing more funding for

students who are a part of this population. For example, leaders could lobby for funding

for their institutions of higher education to receive money that will only be allocated for

African American men to complete the highest level of education; this gesture would

ultimately increase the number of African American men who not only apply for

admission to a doctoral program, but graduate. The research shows "African American

males comprise one-third of all doctoral students. Some have speculated on the enormous

impact an educational imbalance will create economically, politically, socially, and

personally within the African American community and the nation as a whole" (Cintrón,

2010, p. 12). The change that needs to be made is to address the lack of effort leadership

has taken to actively seek to increase the economic climate for African American male

doctoral recipients. The shortage of funding for education to this population alludes to an

underlying belief of CRT that most unequal structures in contemporary society might be

appropriately attributed to apathy rather than malice (Cintrón, 2010, p. 12).

Research Question 2

What types of activities can be implemented to encourage African American men

to become more motivated to seek a higher degree and encourage others to do likewise?

Findings showed it is imperative that young African American boys in elementary

school understand the importance of education through activities such as thinking

activities that will motivate them to see themselves in a number of professions. Mentor

summer camps can be used to address the issue of minimal numbers of mentors being

available in the African American community. Mentor summer camps can consist of

mentors being paired up with mentees who look like them and to whom they can relate culturally. Participants were on one accord about giving back to youth and starting the conversation about the importance of education. Participant 1 stated, "Each one teach one is the most important direction to follow." Cintrón (2010) found:

> African American males' perceptions regarding their higher education experiences form the basis of current research in the area of African American males in higher education. In relation to social support, however, many African American males accredited their success to a strong network of family, friends, mentors, instructors, religion, and fellow African American students. (p. 12)

In support of this idea, Edward and Welch (2011) shared that once African American male PhD holders are involved in academic management, future African American students will no longer be exposed to an irrelevant curriculum.

Other activities that may encourage African American men include better marketing from those in leadership. Marketing about furthering education that is geared toward African American men needs to be motivated by leadership roles that glorify professions such as scientists, doctors, and lawyers, and less about athletes and musicians. This marketing would have to be at the elementary level for African American boys, allowing them the opportunity to identify with some African Americans in these roles. Participant 3 declared, "In this world there are more African American male doctors than African American male athletes and musicians, but that is not what is being conveyed to young African American males." In a phenomenological study, Levine (2008) found students did not have any stereotypes on matters relating to school, but highlighted major limitations as capital and minimal interest as the main causes of a lack of interest in the pursuit of doctoral degrees in various schools. Leadership can encourage this population in making them aware through marketing that capital and wealth are not just obtained by a profession in the music industry and sports careers, but by encouraging

them to think outside their block or their neighbor, and this may allow a young African

American man to aspire to be more like what he can see on media outlets as a successful

African American man in the form of a chemist, doctor, pharmacist, or leader of an all-

African American board of directors of a major Fortune 500 corporation.

Limitations of the Study

Findings of the study are limited to the participants only and cannot be

generalized to the overall population as the participants for the study were individuals

who had earned a doctoral degree and the findings reflect their lived experiences. This

study involved a qualitative approach and the limitation on the findings is characteristic

of this type of research.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study involved the process of descriptive phenomenology to explore the

lived experiences of African American men who earned doctoral degrees. In

recommending future research, Colaizzi's process should be used to provide an

exhaustive description help broaden the understanding of African American men's

experiences through conducting these research studies. The first recommendation for

future research is to conduct a study with African American men at the master's level to

understand why they have not pursued a doctoral degree. This future research can

potentially help reveal whether the reason for the lack of African American men

completing doctoral degrees is centered around leadership to get a more focused lens on

where the gap exists. The second recommendation for future research is to conduct a

study on how leadership is involved in the admissions process for African American men

applying for doctoral programs. The third recommendation is to conduct a study to

determine whether there is correlation between the marketing of leadership roles (e.g., dentists, doctors, and scientists) toward young African American men and African American men seeking advanced degrees.

Implications

The data from this research will have long-term benefits for a better quality of leadership, economics, and mentorship. This dissertation addressed the for leadership to should recognize that exposure to motivating and stimulating educational environments through mentorship beginning at the elementary level for African American boys is very important. Once African American men are motivated through mentorship and mentors are present at institutions of higher education, this may help in addressing the low graduation rates for African American men. A push for like-minded mentors for African American men quite possibly may have a long-term effect on the professional and personal esteem of this population and their communities. In addition, economics is a critical component when considering a valuable education. Funding for African American education should be increased to enhance the long-term funding that can be given to schools that are majority minority.

Conclusions

This study consisted of gathering information about the lived experiences and perceptions of 10 African American men who were graduates of doctoral programs. The qualitative phenomenological study provided findings that can be used to understand how leaders can implement activities to motivate African American men to pursue a doctoral degree and encourage other African American men to do the same. In addition, various activities that might have been implemented by leaders to increase the completion rates

of African American men receiving doctoral degrees were studied . Findings from the interviews provide leadership within higher institutions with a roadmap for how to recruit and keep African American men enrolled and graduating from their institutions. For example, leadership may decide to implement diversity initiatives that are inclusive of African American men. Based on these findings, leadership may also decide to implement a mentorship program for African American men on campus. This research study should be used as the key to help recognize where African American men have not been supported and start the conversation of how leadership can be better equipped to address the different situations African American men may experience during their doctoral process. Providing African American men with the added-value of mentorship through leadership is a great asset for them to pass on to the next generation of African American men.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Research Instrument

Participant Code/Alias: _____

Part I: *General Demographic Items*

Age Group:
_____ 18 - 30 years   _____ 31 - 40 years

_____ 41 - 50 years   _____ 51 - 65 years

_____ older than 65 years

Professional Field: _____

Doctoral degree type: _____ Year degree completed: _____

Part II: *The following questions will be used to guide both the individual interviews and to lead the focus group discussion.*

1. What were some of the factors that actually motivated you to attend graduate school and to earn a doctoral degree, and in looking back do you think there were other initiatives that could have provided additional motivation for you during the decision-making process?

2. Were there any specific ethnicity issues, under the control of leadership (socially and professionally), which because of being an African American man may have had a positive or negative impact on your decision to pursue a doctoral degree? If so, would you please elaborate?

3. What activity, legal initiative, or provision provided by school leadership or governmental agency would you say had the greatest impact on you as being successful in accomplishing your doctoral degree?

4. What educational institutional resources did you find most effective when trying to attain your doctoral degree that leaders should be aware of for future consideration?

5. What are some of the challenges you would inform leadership to be concerned with when trying to motivate African American men to pursue a doctoral degree?

6. Were there any specific support groups, special activities, or other types of motivational activities that influenced you to pursue and earn a doctoral degree? If yes, please share some of this information.

7. What activities or barriers under leadership control do you perceive might have the largest negative impact on African American men achieving doctoral degrees?

8. From your lived experience, what types of activities do you think leaders might implement to increase the number of African American men who would pursue and complete doctoral degrees?

9. From your experience, are there any other perceptions or ideas you would like to share that you think leaders should be aware of when trying to encourage African American men to pursue and succeed in obtaining a doctoral degree? If yes, please share your observations and ideas.

APPENDIX B

Invitation to Participate

Hi, my name is Lerita Watkins and I am a doctoral candidate at National Louis University working on a Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership degree. I am conducting a study entitled The Importance of Leadership Activities in Addressing the Shortage of African American Men Completing Doctoral Degrees. The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of African American men who earned doctoral degrees to obtain an understanding of some of the activities implemented by leaders that motivated them to pursue a higher education. The other purpose of this study, is to investigate what methods and activities might be implemented to help increase the completion rate of African Americans men, taking an in-depth look at the involvement of all levels of leadership. A qualitative method will be used for this study.

I am seeking African American male professionals who meet the following criteria in order to participate in the study:

- Obtained a doctoral degree
- Identify as African American man
- Obtained a doctoral degree in the past 15 years

Participants' names will not be used in the material write-up so there will be no manner of knowing from where participants work nor will the particular organization's name be shared in the material write-up. Participants will be given pseudonyms such as Participant 1, Participant 2, etc. Should organizational names emerge in the interviews, the organizations will be given pseudonyms as well, such as Organization 1, Organization 2, etc. and only the principal researcher will know to which participant or organization the pseudonym aligns.

By participating in this study, the participant will know that he has contributed to adding to the body of knowledge in helping professional and community leaders who seek to motivate more African American men to pursue a doctoral degree, as well as individuals within the African American community who wishes to obtain a doctorate.

If you are interested in participating and believe you meet the study participant qualifications, please contact the researcher:

Lerita Watkins
Lwatkins5@my.nl.edu
312-856-3686

Thank you in advance for your consideration and participation.

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent for Individual Interviews

My name is Lerita Watkins and I am a Doctoral student at National Louis University. I am asking you to participate in this study, "The Importance of Leadership Activities in Addressing the Shortage of African American Men Completing Doctoral Degrees" occurring from 03-2020 to 06-2020. The purpose is to examine why the number of African American Men receiving doctoral degrees is low.

This study will help professional and community leaders who seek to motivate more African American Men to pursue a doctoral degree, as well as individuals within the African American community who wish to obtain a doctorate. This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

By signing below, you are providing consent to participate in a research project conducted by Lerita Watkins, Doctoral student, at National Louis University, Chicago, IL.

Please understand that the purpose of the study is to explore the lived experiences of African American male doctoral recipients to investigate why the number of African American men receiving doctoral degrees is low. Participation in this study will include:

- One individual interview scheduled at your convenience in the winter and spring of the 2019-2020 academic year.

  o Interviews will last up to 45 minutes and include approximately nine questions to understand the lived experiences of African American men with doctoral degrees to obtain an understanding of some of the activities implemented by leaders that motivated them to pursue and earn their doctoral degrees.

  o Interviews will be audio recorded and participants may view and have final approval on the content of interview transcripts.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported at conferences and used to inform professionals and community leadership of the practices and strategies that can motivate and increase the number of African American men completing doctoral degrees (data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants). To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will secure recordings, transcripts, and field notes in a locked cabinet in her home office. Only the researcher, Lerita Watkins, will have access to the data.

There are no anticipated risks or benefits, no greater than those encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be useful to professional and community leaders who seek to motivate more African American men to pursue a

doctoral degree, as well as individuals within the African American community who wish to obtain a doctorate.

Upon request, you may receive summary results from this study and copies of any publications that may occur. Please email the researcher, Lerita Watkins, at lwatkins5@my.nl.edu to request results from this study.

In the event that you have questions or require additional information, please contact the researcher, Lerita Watkins, at lwatkins5@my.nl.edu or call 312-856-3686.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact the dissertation chair: Dr. Pender Noriega, email: pnoriega@nl.edu; the co-chairs of NLU's Institutional Research Board: Dr. Shaunti Knauth, email: Shaunti.Knauth@nl.edu, phone: (312) 261-3526; or Dr. Kathleen Cornett, email: kcornett@nl.edu, phone: (844) 380-5001. Co-chairs are located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Thank you for your consideration

Consent: I understand that by signing below, I am agreeing to participate in the study, "**The Importance of Leadership Activities in Addressing the Shortage of African American Males Completing Doctoral Degrees."** My participation will consist of the activities below during the 03/2020 – 06/2020 time period:

- Join in one of 12 to 15 interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____

Researcher's Signature   Date