

Degree Perseverance Among African Americans Transitioning from Historically  
Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to Predominantly White Institution (PWIs)

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates degree perseverance among African Americans who transitioned from an undergraduate music program at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) to a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). A framework based on Bourdieu's cultural capital theory and Yosso's community cultural wealth theory was employed to examine how academic, cultural, and social aspects of participants' undergraduate and graduate school experiences influenced their perseverance. Because those aspects are intricately intertwined with race, I also employed critical race theory and double consciousness theory, and used Angela Duckworth's Grit Scale to measure degree perseverance.

Eight African American male instrumental music educators participated in this study. Research questions included: What are the experiences of African Americans who have transitioned from undergraduate music programs at HBCUs to graduate music programs at PWIs?; How do these individuals compare academic, social, and cultural aspects of their experiences within two institutional environments?; What are their self-perceptions of their own degree perseverance?; and, What social, cultural, and academic aspects of their experiences influenced their perseverance?

After developing a portrait of each participant's pre-college and college experiences, analysis revealed that participants were very persistent; however, academic, cultural, social, and racial experiences influenced their perseverance. Participants employed dominant cultural capital and community cultural wealth as well as their "Grittiness" to successfully transition from an HBCU to a PWI.

Recommendations for HBCUs, PWIs, and the profession are offered toward improving the experiences of African American music students in higher education. HBCUs must hold their faculty and students accountable for developing a broader musical experience beyond marching band, and address colorism on their campuses. PWIs should recognize and accept the capital that African Americans bring, acknowledge that African Americans need access to social support networks, and assess how their environments, actions, and decisions may devalue or discount African Americans. While more research is needed regarding the experiences of African Americans in music programs, African American students must also take active roles in shaping their own educational experiences by seeking assistance that will improve their experiences.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

### **Introduction**

My interests in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) span back to my years in high school band in the South. Every year, my band peers and I were encouraged by our band directors not only to participate in large music ensemble festivals such as district and state competitions, but also to participate in solo and ensemble festivals, and various music camps throughout the state and region. When we went to these competitions and festivals, I saw mostly White students and noticed that predominantly African American programs were rarely represented, if at all. On the other hand, I attended a few marching band competitions with friends where only predominantly African American bands competed and where I never saw a predominantly White marching band competing. I wondered about these differences between music programs.

Student enrollment in my school's band program was based on playing ability and student choice. However, sometimes we asked our directors why we never participated in competitions in which predominantly Black programs competed. They usually responded that predominantly Black band programs in our city were not very good or their band directors were not effective music educators. These encounters led me to ask myself several questions: Despite historical efforts toward equality and justice within education in the U.S., why were programs separated and what contributed to this separation? Are predominantly African American music programs not good enough to compete in competitions and festivals that White students participate in?

Extending into my years in college at a PWI, my curiosities about predominantly African American music programs continued to develop. Through my membership with Sigma Alpha Iota, an international music fraternity for women, and my participation with my university's jazz program during my undergraduate experience, I was afforded the opportunity to meet students from various HBCUs who would later become my friends and colleagues. In years following, we conversed over the phone or through Facebook. We often discussed their experiences of negotiating a graduate music program at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). In later years, I specifically remember a conversation with a male friend who graduated from an undergraduate music degree program at an HBCU in the South and later decided to attend a graduate music program at a PWI located in the Midwest. He stated:

This is way more difficult than I thought. Not only am I one of very few African Americans here, but I also must take remedial courses to catch up with my peers and meet the standards of this program. I was cheated out of a receiving a good education in my undergraduate experience . . . it did not prepare me for this.

Although my friend contemplated removing himself from the graduate program at the PWI, he persevered and completed the program and is now a successful jazz musician in New York City. Several of my friends and colleagues who have transitioned from an HBCU to a PWI in the field of music have described their experiences as similar. In comparison, I did not encounter experiences like those of my friends and colleagues; I surmise that perhaps it was due to the fact that both my undergraduate and graduate experiences in higher education were situated at PWIs. However, other friends' experiences were quite familiar to me, especially the experience of being one of few or the only African American in a music class within a music program at a PWI.



My knowledge of the experiences of my friends who transitioned from an HBCU to a PWI prompted me to ask the following questions: Why are individuals who transition from HBCUs to PWIs encountering difficulty during their experiences at PWIs? Are HBCUs not preparing their music students appropriately for graduate music study? What influences the experiences of African Americans transitioning between HBCUs and PWIs?

After receiving my master's degree, I worked as an assistant band director at a high school in the Southwest. My colleagues had often hosted student teachers from surrounding HBCUs prior to my term there. During my two-year tenure, we hosted four student teachers. Unlike strategies I had learned while earning my degrees from a PWI, these student teachers often used strategies based on the oral tradition and rote teaching. In addition, they were often late and overwhelmed, in part because they were still engaged in completing coursework, student recitals, and additional tasks that disrupted their focus on their student teaching experience. My colleagues and I discussed ways to provide them with additional methods and strategies that would help them be successful in teaching within a K-12 setting.

These experiences, and the experiences my colleagues shared about transitioning from an undergraduate music program at an HBCU to a graduate music program at a PWI, prompted me to wonder about several questions: What is the difference between a music program at an HBCU and one at a PWI? What are the environments of music programs at HBCUs and PWIs? What is the mission of music programs at HBCUs and PWIs in regards to specific degree offerings? I designed this study to explore aspects of these and other questions presented in this introduction.

## **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate degree perseverance among African Americans who have transitioned from undergraduate music programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to graduate music programs at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Using multiple theoretical lenses, I examined participants' experiences and how those experiences influenced their perceptions of perseverance. This study was guided by the following questions:

- 1) What are the experiences of African Americans who have transitioned from undergraduate music programs at HBCUs to graduate music programs at PWIs?
- 2) How do these students compare academic, social, and cultural aspects of their experience within two institutional environments?
- 3) What are these students' self-perceptions of their own degree perseverance?
- 4) What social, cultural, and academic aspects of their experience influence perseverance among African Americans who have transitioned from undergraduate music programs at HBCUs to graduate music programs at PWIs?

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

Cultural capital theory and community cultural wealth theory provide suitable frameworks for exploring differences among students' experiences of HBCUs and PWIs. While these frameworks helped me to understand how multidimensional (e.g. social, cultural, and academic) aspects of college experience influence students' self-perceptions of their own degree perseverance, these theoretical lenses are also problematic; this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two. In this section, I present a general overview of these theories.

Bourdieu defines cultural capital as “a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artifacts” (Bourdieu, 1968, p. 7). He suggests that social agents actively negotiate hierarchical structures in efforts to pursue cultural endowments within a given society and to transform their current status. For instance, an individual may pursue specific credentials from an accredited institution to gain additional economic capital that may then be converted to both cultural and social capital, contributing to the individual moving into a higher class (Orr, 2003). Carter (2003) parallels “dominant capital” with Bourdieu’s definition of cultural capital, “the conceptualization of powerful, high status cultural attributes, codes, and signals” (p. 138). Thus, individuals who obtain cultural capital are granted “the ability to ‘walk the walk’ and ‘talk the talk’ of the cultural power brokers in our society” (Carter, 2003, p. 138).

Conversely, Carter (2003) states that non-dominant capital “embodies a set of tastes, or schemes of appreciation and understandings, accorded to a lower status group, that include preferences for particular linguistic, musical, or interactional styles” (p. 138). Yosso (2005) asserts that those whose culture is subordinate to the dominant culture must employ additional strategies in efforts to access dominant cultural capital. Yosso proposes community cultural wealth as a theoretical framework that not only provides insight, but also a language that functions as a bridge of empathy between dominant and non-dominant cultures. She defines community cultural wealth as a collection of knowledge, skills, and abilities employed by people of color to gain access to dominant

cultural capital using multiple informational networks within the community, family, or immediate relationships.

Although dominant and majoritarian groups in society may not acknowledge non-dominant capital, Yosso (2005) and Carter (2003) suggest that it is important and should be recognized. Non-dominant capital has always been a vital part of the culture and structures within the communities of people of color (Yosso, 2005) and has consistently been used to navigate institutional structures that were not created with people of color in mind. While dominant and non-dominant cultures are distinctly different, obtaining cultural currencies of a particular majoritarian society is a common theme among both (Carter, 2003).

While cultural capital theory and community cultural wealth theory focus on class and status acquisition, Stroter, Mienko, Chang, Kang, Miyawaki, and Schultz (2012) state that “class, race, and place are intricately bound to one another and a singular focus on any of these factors is an insufficient explanation for educational outcomes” (p. 18-19). Echoing W. E. B. Du Bois’ concern towards inequity and race dynamics in the U.S. from the late 19th to the 20th century (Du Bois, 1903, 1968), Stroter et al. propose that the “color line” continues to be an issue in the 21st century (p.18). Although cultural capital theory and community cultural wealth theory were used as theoretical frameworks to analyze and understand data within this study I will also examine the intersection of race and access to capital.

### **Legal Issues Surrounding the Education of African Americans**

Revising the societal and legal structures in the United States that support practices of segregation has proved to be a daunting and ongoing task (Allen & Jewell,

2002; Karson, 2005; Kaplin & Lee, 2007). The Emancipation Proclamation and the ending of the Civil War both theoretically abolished slavery. However, freedom for slaves did not happen immediately. For example, not until Union Major General Gordon Granger and his soldiers seized Galveston Island on June 19, 1865, did Texas comply with the already two-year-old Emancipation Proclamation (<https://www.tsl.state.tx.us/ref/abouttx/juneteenth.html>).

Shortly thereafter, Congress ratified the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution. The Fourteenth Amendment (1868) guaranteed equal protection of the rights of African Americans and the Fifteenth Amendment (1870) granted African American men the right to vote (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). In response to the Fifteenth Amendment, White extremists in the South employed multiple strategies in efforts to discourage or prevent Blacks from voting. Some of their tactics included literacy tests, poll taxes, harassment, lynching, and other brutal forms of violence (Karson, 2005). Almost a century later, southern African Americans would be guaranteed the right to vote through the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Karson, 2005).

Despite a shift in legislation and the effort of assimilating Blacks into society during the late 1800s, Karson (2005) states that “the Supreme Court struck perhaps the most crippling blow to the Black struggle for equality” in the 1896 court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, ruling that “separate but equal institutions were constitutional in primary and

secondary public schools” (Allen & Jewell, 2002). This ruling allowed school districts to maintain *de facto*<sup>1</sup> school segregation, often in institutions that were not truly equal.

Fifty-four years later, in *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), an African American man named Herman Marion Sweatt challenged *Plessy*. At the time, no law school in Texas admitted any African American students. Assisted by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), he filed suit against the University of Texas in Austin in 1946, after being denied admittance into UT’s Law School by then-president Theophilis Painter solely due to his race ([http://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1949/1949/1949\\_44](http://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1949/1949/1949_44)). The District Court denied Sweatt a *mandamus*<sup>2</sup> in efforts to seek a remedy of resolution. The court continued the case while the state established a separate law school in Houston, Texas State University for Negroes (TSUN). The District Court ruled that at TSUN, “privileges, advantages, and opportunities for the study of law [were] substantially equivalent to those offered by the state to White students at the University of Texas” ([http://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1949/1949/1949\\_44](http://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1949/1949/1949_44)). Although Sweatt was offered the opportunity to attend the newly erected school, he refused.

TSUN’s non-accredited Law School, however, was not equipped with resources equal to that of UT. For instance, UT’s Law School had 16 full-time and three part-time professors, 850 students, a library of 65,000 volumes, a law review, moot court facilities, distinguished alumni, and other resources. Conversely, TSUN had five full-time

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<sup>1</sup> Racial segregation not supported by legal requirement, but that happens by fact.

<sup>2</sup> A writ or order issued from a court of superior jurisdiction that commands an inferior tribunal to perform, or refrain from performing a particular act, the performance or omission of which is required by law as an obligation.

professors, and four of those commuted from UT in Austin to TSUN. The school had 23 students, a library of 16,500 volumes, a practice court, a legal association, and one alumnus admitted to the Texas Bar.

([http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/search/display.html?terms=Sweatt&url=/supct/html/historics/USSC\\_CR\\_0339\\_0629\\_ZO.html](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/search/display.html?terms=Sweatt&url=/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0339_0629_ZO.html)).

After the District Court denied Sweatt's request, his lawyers from the NAACP sent the case to the Court of Civil Appeals in the Texas Supreme Court where Sweatt was denied a writ of error on further appeal. However, due to the constitutional issues involved, Sweatt was granted a *certiorari*.<sup>3</sup> The case eventually was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court where, in a unanimous decision, justices held that "the Equal Protection Clause [of the Fourteenth Amendment] required that Sweatt be admitted into the university" ([http://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1949/1949/1949\\_44](http://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1949/1949/1949_44)). The Court also found that the separate Law School was "grossly unequal," arguing that "the separate school would be inferior in multiple areas including faculty, course variety, library facilities, legal writing opportunities, and overall prestige" ([http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/search/display.html?terms=Sweatt&url=/supct/html/historics/USSC\\_CR\\_0339\\_0629\\_ZO.html](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/search/display.html?terms=Sweatt&url=/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0339_0629_ZO.html)). In addition, the Court stated that "mere separation of the majority of the law students harmed students' ability to compete in the legal arena" ([http://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1949/1949/1949\\_44](http://www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1949/1949/1949_44)). *Sweatt* (1950) was the first case that successfully challenged the "separate but equal" doctrine, setting a

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<sup>3</sup> A writ or order by which a higher court reviews a decision of a lower court.

precedent for further challenges to Plessy's ruling. TSUN is now the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University.

Four years following *Sweatt*, additional changes in education resulted from the Supreme Court overturning the *Plessy* ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Based on *Sweatt*, Chief Justice Warren ruled that "separate but equal public primary and secondary schools were unconstitutional," granting all students the right to attend any public school regardless of their race (Allen & Jewell, 2002). However, the Supreme Court ruling failed to mandate a timeline for implementing the process of desegregation in public schools. According to Wilkinson (1979, in Richardson and Harris, 2004), some analysts believe that the Court "intended the ambiguity and brevity of its decision to encourage interpretation and inference" (p. 366). Others interpreted Chief Justice Warren's ruling as only suggesting that K-12 schools be integrated; however, he never made this distinction. The Supreme Court then delegated the task of overseeing the desegregation process in public schools to District Courts throughout the U.S. who issued the ruling of *Brown II* (1955), demanding that schools desegregate "with all deliberate speed." Similar to the ruling of *Brown I*, this ruling was also intentionally ambiguous, leaving each state and local school district to their own interpretation. Some school districts underhandedly created new laws to counteract the ruling of *Brown II*. For instance, in an effort to hold desegregation at bay, the school district in Prince Edward, Virginia closed all of their schools and opened new all-White private schools, leaving Blacks in the county without access to education. Both rulings, *Brown* and *Brown II*, only integrated K-12 public schools; they did not fully succeed in solidifying equal



educational opportunity for African Americans (Yosso, Parker, Solórzano & Lynn, 2004).

The Brown rulings inspired future efforts to continue to create more equal educational opportunities for all citizens. For instance, in *Hawkins v. Board of Control* (1956), the U.S. Supreme Court used the benchmark of *Brown v. Board of Education* to allow equal access to institutions of higher education in the state of Florida. According to Roebuck and Murty (1993), many people, especially in the southern states, neither encouraged nor welcomed such rulings.

Eight years after *Hawkins*, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title IV of that act stated that no institution that also supported segregation could use federal funds. The U.S. Attorney General issued lawsuits to those public K–12 schools that endorsed segregation and who also received federal funds under Title IV.

In the following year, the Higher Education Act of 1965 was established. This legislation included Title III, also referred to as “Strengthening and Developing Institutions.” In Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, the U.S. Congress defined HBCUs as institutions established prior to 1964 whose mission was exclusively to educate Blacks (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). According to Roebuck and Murty (1993), this legislation was designed as a “direct intercession, favoring Black colleges and universities and as a federal commitment to the survival and enhancements of HBCUs” (p. 668). States were not only required to enforce desegregation, but also to increase access to all institutions of higher education for all minorities (Roebuck & Murty, 1993).

Six years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund filed suit against the Department of Health, Education,

and Welfare (HEW) in the court case of *Adams v. Richardson* (1970) (Palmer, Davis, & Gasman, 2011). HEW was accused of allocating federal funds to 19 southern states with dual education systems designed to create barriers for a particular race, ethnicity, or minority, in this case, African Americans. As a result, in 1977 the federal courts ordered HEW to create guidelines for states with dual systems to follow while preparing “desegregation strategies in compliance with Title IV.” In an effort to monitor usage of federal funds, the U.S. Supreme Court required the Office for Civil Rights, now part of the Department of Education, to monitor desegregation plans of those states who were suspected of having segregated systems (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). According to the federal court, plaintiffs in *Adams* “lacked private rights of action against a federal agency.” Following court-ordered monitoring, *Adams* was dismissed (Brown, 1999, p. xvii in Palmer et al., 2011).

*United States v. Fordice* (1992) is the most important legal case regarding the future of HBCUs. In 1975 James Ayers and other African American student plaintiffs filed suit against Kirk Fordice, then Mississippi’s governor, for allowing racial discrimination in the university system (Palmer et al., 2011). When the case reached the U.S. Supreme Court 17 years later, the court found the state of Mississippi guilty of continuing portions of their former *de jure*<sup>4</sup> segregated system (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002), and mandated that all public institutions of higher education in Mississippi, both HBCUs and traditionally White institutions, find ways to eliminate all remnants of a dual system.

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<sup>4</sup> Legal separation of races.

In addition, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered Mississippi to pay for “new academic programs, construction, and start an endowment for the state’s HBCUs” (p. 123). Mississippi agreed to pay \$503 million over the course of 17 years to state HBCUs. Although most of the money was used to enhance programs and facilities at HBCUs, the state of Mississippi did not allow these institutions to control their share of funds “earmarked for the recruitment of non-Black students unless they were able to recruit and retain at least 10% of non-Black students for three consecutive years” (p. 123). The Court announced that “states would not be in compliance with the Court’s decision until they ‘eradicate policies and practices traceable to the prior *de jure* system that continue to foster segregation” (Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002, p. 332 in *United States v. Fordice*, 1992, p. 2892). It should be noted that the Court’s ruling did not order mergers or consolidations of programs and institutions of HBCUs and historically White institutions (Palmer et al., 2011). Instead, the Court returned *Fordice* to a federal district court in Mississippi, mandating that it create a plan to desegregate state institutions. The U.S. Supreme Court relinquished its decision, instead suggesting institutions of higher education in Mississippi implement the following: 1) revise admission policies; 2) consolidate duplicated degree programs; 3) revise their system of institutional mission classification (“comprehensive” v. “regional and urban”); and 4) consider consolidating all public institutions into a lesser number (Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002).

In the court case, *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California* (1978), Allan Bakke, a White student, challenged race-based affirmative action admission policies at the University of California Davis Medical School. UC-Davis initially reserved 16 of 100 spots in their medical program for students of color; when Bakke was denied admission,

he filed a class action suit against the university for discrimination against Whites. In 1978, the California Supreme Court delivered two rulings. The Court determined in a 5-4 decision that UC-Davis' preferential racial quotas violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Simultaneously, a *de facto* majority decision of the Supreme Court, known as the Powell Compromise of 1978, ruled that race could be used as one of several components to determine student admission, asserting the remedial rationale, an approach to remedy past and present discrimination in efforts to fortify the objectives of Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Yosso et al., 2004). As a result of the Court's rulings, Bakke was granted admission into the school.

The case of *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) involved a White female student named Barbara Grutter who was not admitted into the University of Michigan Law School. She claimed that the University of Michigan used race-based admissions standards. However, the Supreme Court of Michigan in a 5-4 decision ruled that the university's race-based admissions policies were constitutional due to the diversity rationale, an approach to achieve diversity among student populations within institutions of higher education.

*Hopwood v. Texas* (1996) is recorded as the only successful court case to challenge institutional affirmative action policies in regards to the admission of students (Scanlan, 1996). Litigation for this case began in 1992 and four White students, Cheryl Hopwood, Douglas Carvell, Kenneth Elliott, and David Rogers, who claimed that they were denied admissions to the University of Texas Law School in Austin, Texas, due to race-based admission policies in an alleged violation of their Fourteenth Amendment rights. They argued that their credentials were greater than majority of minority students admitted into the program. In 1994, Judge Sparkis of the U.S. District Court for the

Western District of Texas ruled that “efforts to remedy ‘the long history of pervasive discrimination in our society’ and to obtain a diverse student body represented compelling state interests that justified the use of race or ethnicity in the admissions process” (Hopwood I, 861 F. Supp. at 553 in Scanlan, 1996, p. 1582). Thus, the Court declined the plaintiff’s claim to declare race-based affirmative action as unconstitutional. The Court also struck down the divided admissions policy used by UT’s Law School, stating that “it was not narrowly tailored to remedy the efforts of past discrimination because it failed to afford each individual applicant a comparison with the entire pool of applicants, not just those of the applicant’s own race” (p. 1582).

Shortly following, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit reversed the decision of the District Court, ruling that the law school could not use race as a factor in admission of students because it violated the Fourteenth Amendment. As a result, the Court of Appeals ruled, “any consideration of race or ethnicity by the law school for the purpose of achieving a diverse student body is not a compelling state interest under the Fourteenth Amendment” (Id. at 944 in Scanlan, 1996, p. 1583). However, the Court did accept the rationale of UT’s Law School of “remedying past discrimination as a compelling state interest” (p. 1583). Overall, the Court contended “the law school was not in a position to implement a remedial plan because it had not discriminated against the benefited groups in the recent past” (p. 1583). UT appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court but was denied and Hopwood was admitted in UT’s Law School in 1996. As a result of the complexities and challenges associated with affirmative action policies in regards to higher education in Texas, the legislature implemented the “Top Ten Percent Law.” This law guarantees automatic admission to all state-funded universities in

Texas to students who graduate in the top 10% of their high school class, regardless of race or potential differences in educational opportunities available to students in different schools.

*Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* (2011) serves as an illustration of how the intersection of race and education continues to present challenges for both legal and educational communities in the 21st century. Similar to the petitioners of *Bakke* (1978) and *Grutter* (2003), Abigail Fisher, a White woman, also argued against using race as a means to achieve diversity within the student population of the university. Although Fisher did not graduate in the top 10% of her high school class, she argued that UT's denial violated her Fourteenth Amendment right to equal protection because she was denied admission to a public university in favor of minority students with lesser credentials. However, the decisions of the University of Texas at Austin (UT) had followed the "Top Ten Percent Law," and the court ruled in favor of the University.

Due to the fact that the court denied Fisher an *en banc*<sup>5</sup> hearing by a 9-7 ruling, her lawyers filed a petition seeking review by the U.S. Supreme Court in September of 2011. By October 2012, Fisher was on the calendar of the Supreme Court. The Court declined to adopt Fisher's argument, ruling that her continued pursuit of her claim was no longer viable. According to UT, had it exclusively employed race-neutral admissions, Fisher would not have been admitted not only due to the fact that she did not graduate in the top 10% of her class, but due to UT's competitive individualized review of applications, which included an Academic Index (AI) and a Personal Achievement Index

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<sup>5</sup> A hearing involving all justices of the court, instead of an appointed panel

(PAI). The AI consists of grades and standardized test scores and “race is considered in a contextualized fashion only in the PAI” (Fisher v. University of Texas-Austin, 2013).

Fisher argued on the assumption that her PAI was lower because of race. UT stated that Fisher would have still been denied even if she had a “perfect” PAI. In a decision of 7-1, the U.S. Supreme Court vacated their decision on June 24, 2013, sending Fisher back to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, stating that it failed to apply “strict scrutiny” (Fisher v. University of Texas-Austin, 2013).

Arguments for *Fisher* continued on November 13, 2013 at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. While transcriptions from the court have not been publicized, some sources have reported that the hearing examined UT’s race-conscious admission policies, race-neutral alternatives, and how the definition of critical mass is defined and what should take place after it has been reached.<sup>6</sup> The Court’s examination also reflected on UTs history and experience in developing its admissions policies in regards to constitutionality. From 1997 to 2004, UT experimented with multiple admission approaches in efforts to increase minority attendance from high school students in Texas. During this time only 3-4% of students admitted were African American. After UT employed the Top Ten Percent rule, between 2005 and 2008 enrollment of African Americans increased considerably by 28% (Fisher v. University of Texas-Austin, 2013).

In summary, this brief outline illuminates how race has continued to influence legal discourse and decision-making affecting the education of African Americans, from

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/cert/11-345>

the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 well into the 21st century. This section also disclosed how overt and covert forms of racism in policy, society, and educational systems have slowed—and in some cases prohibited—African Americans from receiving educational opportunities equal to those of Whites. Literature examined in this section is important to my study because it offers both historical and contextual background needed to understand current educational settings and experiences of African Americans in higher education.

### **The Need for the Study**

Since the early 20th century, policy-makers, researchers, sociologists, and educators have investigated racial disparities and injustices in higher education in the U.S. (Bennett & Xie, 2003; Allen & Jewell, 1992; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Redd, 1998; Du Bois, 1903a, 1903b, 1968; Roebuck & Murty, 1998). Those inquiries include investigations of the experiences, attitudes, persistence and navigational skills of African American students in both Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) (Gasman, 2010; Hirschfield, & Viltaggio, 2008; Strayhorn, 2013; Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004). HBCUs were first created to serve as educational strongholds against racial disparities and inequities experienced by African Americans. According to Harper (2007), these institutions have been and are currently responding to social and cultural shifts of our time. The history of HBCUs is outlined in Chapter Two.

In the fall of 2011, I conducted a content analysis of music programs at HBCUs. According to Matthews (2011), 105 operational HBCUs represent 2.3% of the 4,495 institutions of higher education in the U.S. (NCES, 2010). I found that only 74 of those



institutions, including both accredited and non-accredited schools, offer undergraduate music degrees. Of those, only six offer a master's degree in music, and none of them offer a doctoral degree in music (McCall, 2011). Findings suggested that students who earned an undergraduate degree from an HBCU, having few other options, were practically pre-destined to attend a PWI for their graduate studies in music; thus, African American students aspiring to pursue a graduate degree in music were much more likely to experience dual social, cultural, and academic aspects of college environments while transitioning from an HBCU to a PWI. Although a robust collection of research investigates the experiences of African Americans within settings at either HBCUs or PWIs (Anderson & Freeman, 1977; Van Camp, Barden & Sloan, 2009; Bohr, Pascarella, & Terenzini, 1995; Brower & Ketterhagen, 2004; Centra, 1970; DeSousa & Kuh, 1996; Flowers, 2007; Rosenblatt & Lemon, 2008; Van Camp, Barden, Sloan, 2009, Strayhorn, 2009), fewer studies investigate transition experiences of African Americans from HBCUs to PWIs (Cox & Cox, 2010; Simmons, 2011; Webster, Stockard, & Henson, 1981).

Bohr et al. (1995) found that despite lesser resources and the enrollment of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, HBCUs consistently foster socio-psychological campus environments that encourage completion and persistence, contributing to better retention and completion rates among African Americans at HBCUs than at PWIs. While *Brown v. Board of Education* guaranteed that equal opportunities would be accessible to all students, Brower and Ketterhagen (2004) assert that due to varied expectations, PWIs presents an “inherent mismatch” to many minority students, in particular, African Americans. Due to this “mismatch,” African American

students may have to work harder to adapt to and meet the expectations of PWIs, thus being tasked to “relearn the rules of the institution” (p. 110). As a result, African American students may encounter social isolation, discrimination, and aggression (Brower & Ketterhagen, 2004; Strayhorn, 2009). Brower and Ketterhagen (2004) state that African American students cope with such experiences by adopting a sense of “belonging-within-alienation,” connecting with students with similar backgrounds and experiences within an environment where they are minority (p. 98).

Researchers have investigated various aspects of the college experience and how those aspects influence school success and belonging (Anderson & Freeman, 1977; Felder, 2009; Strayhorn, 2009). A smaller portion of research exists that examines the experiences of African Americans in music programs in higher education (Bradley, 2007; Koza, 2009). These researchers found that, not only were environments at PWIs not reflective of diverse curricula, but audition requirements may possibly play a role in the low enrollment and engagement of minority students (Koza, 2009). Of the literature that I reviewed, not one examines the experiences of African American students who have transitioned from an undergraduate music program at an HBCU to a graduate music degree program at a PWI.

This study helps to fill a void in music education research regarding the experiences of African Americans in undergraduate and graduate music programs through an investigation of degree perseverance among African Americans who have transitioned from an HBCU to a PWI. It will also add to the already existing literature about the general experiences of African Americans within higher education.

## **Guiding Definitions**

### **African Americans**

As defined by the U.S. Census (2013), African Americans are individuals who have origins in any Black group of African descent, including those who identify as African American, Black, or Negro.

### **Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)**

The U.S. Congress, in Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, defined HBCUs as institutions established prior to 1964 whose exclusive mission was to educate Blacks (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Currently, there are 105 HBCUs in the United States. Although these institutions were not called HBCUs until 1965, in this dissertation I will use the term “HBCU” to refer to all institutions whose primary mission was to educate African Americans and who by 1965 were designated as HBCUs. This includes colleges and universities whose student population today is predominantly White, such as Bluefield State College (<http://www.ideastream.org/news/npr/236345546>).

### **Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)**

According to Brown and Dancy (2010), “Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) is the term used to describe institutions of higher learning in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment” (p. 524). Although many of these institutions may also be referred to as historically White institutions in recognition of “the binarism and exclusion supported by the U.S. prior to 1964” (p. 524), for this study, I have chosen to use employ the term Predominantly White Intuitions (PWIs).

## **Academic Aspects**

For this study, academic aspects refer to tangible and non-tangible academic resources such as financial aid, computers, musical instruments, instructors, books, and mentors that assist individuals in acquiring knowledge and skills needed to negotiate educational and social settings in predominantly White and Black spaces.

## **Cultural and Social Aspects**

I found it quite difficult to separate cultural and social aspects of participants' transitional experiences; therefore, I chose to consolidate both. In this study, cultural and social aspects refer to verbal and non-verbal identifiers that afford an individual membership or sense of belonging in a particular space or environment comprised of individuals who share similar identifiers.

## **Perseverance**

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2013), perseverance is “a continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition.” For this study, I will employ Duckworth's (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009) concept of Grit to define perseverance. Duckworth was a classroom teacher who was confronted with the fact that some students out-performed their peers, despite lower IQ and talent levels (Harnett, 2012). Confounded by these findings, she began to explore personality as a factor, specifically zest, tenacity, perseverance, and resiliency. In doing so, she conceptualized Grit, “a personality trait of perseverance and passion toward a long-term goal despite adversity, plateaus in progress, and lack of feedback” (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly 2007, p. 1087).

## **Racial Aspects**

Ladson-Billings (2009 in Wellman, 1977, p. xviii) defines racism as beliefs, despite their intentions, employed to uphold White privilege. Bonilla-Silva, on the other hand, (2010) asserts that racism when defined by Whites and Blacks is varied. Whites define racism as “prejudice,” while most Blacks describe racism as “systematic” and “institutional” (p. 8). For this study, racial aspects refer to attitudes, behaviors, ideals, and structures that support racial inequalities among people of color.

## **“The Band”**

Given participants’ emphasis on their undergraduate experiences in marching band, throughout this study the phrase “the band” refers exclusively to the marching band.

## **Delimitations**

Eight African American men participated in this study. All participants have experienced a transition from an undergraduate music program at an HBCU to a graduate music degree program at a PWI. Findings of this study are limited to only these individuals and are not necessarily representative of all students transitioning from HBCUs to PWIs.

## **Organization of the Dissertation**

In Chapter One, I presented legal history regarding experiences of African Americans in higher education within the settings at HBCUs and PWIs. I briefly outlined a theoretical framework, using cultural capital theory and community and cultural wealth theory; in addition, I examined race. Although I found studies of the experiences of African Americans within higher education, I have so far found no studies regarding the

experiences of African Americans transitioning from undergraduate music programs at HBCUs to graduate music programs at PWIs.

Chapter Two presents a review of literature of HBCUs and their history and PWIs. I also present several theoretical models including cultural capital theory, community cultural wealth theory, and Grit to investigate participants' experiences and their perceptions of their own perseverance. In addition, I include other models that foster perseverance as well as additional frameworks that I later in employ to address race and participants' access to cultural capital.

Chapter Three outlines the rationale that supports my choice of a phenomenological approach for this study.

In Chapter Four, I offer detailed portraits of participants' pre-college experiences. Chapter Five presents comprehensive portraits of each participants' undergraduate experiences at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), as well as in a graduate program at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

In Chapter Six, I discuss participants' perseverance, as related to their Grit Scores and their experiences. In addition, I describe how participants interpret and respond to adversity. Chapter Seven discusses participants' transitional experiences as they coincide with the framework of this study.

In Chapter Eight, I provide implications and suggestions for further research regarding African Americans in music programs at institutions of higher learning. In addition, I provide additional ways to improve and facilitate change at HBCUs and PWIs by constructing partnerships, empowering missing voices, facilitating inclusion,

expanding discussion in preservice music teacher programs, and emphasizing self-awareness.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

This study seeks to investigate perceptions toward degree perseverance of African Americans who have transitioned or are transitioning from undergraduate music programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to graduate music programs at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Using cultural capital theory and community cultural wealth theory, I examined students' experiences and how those experiences influence their perceptions toward perseverance within multiple educational environments.

I begin this chapter with a brief history of the development of HBCUs and PWIs, followed by research about the experiences of African Americans at HBCUs and PWIs. Next, I explore W. E. B. Du Bois' experiences transitioning from an HBCU to a PWI. I then examine three theories that inform my work: cultural capital theory, critical race theory, and community cultural wealth theory. Next, I present multiple approaches toward increasing perseverance among students in a variety of educational settings. Last, I examine Duckworth's theory of Grit and its application in various studies.

#### **Historically Black Colleges And Universities (HBCUs)**

According to the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES, 2010), a total of 4,495 institutions of higher education currently exist in the United States and, of those, 105 are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Matthews, 2011). Referred to as the "1890s schools," more than 200 HBCUs existed prior to 1890 (Brown & Davis, 2001). Due to both state and federal interventions, numbers declined. Although



these institutions represent only 2.3% of higher education institutions in the United States, they enroll approximately 11.6% of African American students pursuing a post-secondary degree, contributing to 33% of degrees earned by African Americans (Matthews, 2011).

HBCUs did not begin as multifaceted structures of academia, but as small organizations, operating in the early 1800s with very modest resources in efforts to teach freed slaves basic skills and etiquette and to educate Black clergymen (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Bennett & Xie, 2003). HBCUs are responsible for having produced this country's first mass group of Black professionals (Bennett & Xie, 2003). From 1896 to 1953 two-thirds of the African American population and most HBCUs resided in the South. By 1954, HBCUs educated approximately 90% of African Americans attending institutions of higher education (Richardson & Harris, 2004).

HBCUs have a shorter history than that of universities in general. Cheyney University was the first HBCU, established in Pennsylvania in 1837. For comparison, Harvard University, the first institution of higher education in the United States, was established in 1636. Throughout the eighteenth century most universities in the U.S. limited enrollment to Whites, although this racial segregation was largely unacknowledged. In response to this racial separation, uniquely designed schools were created to educate and empower African Americans. These became the foundation for the schools now known as HBCUs (Allen & Jewell, 2002).

The history of HBCUs is also related to the founding of normal schools and state teachers colleges through religious organizations and philanthropic land grants (Harper, 2007). Following establishment of Cheyney University in 1837, other HBCUs were

founded, some of them prior to the 1865 end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery with the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States (Allen & Jewell, 2002). The National Land-Grant Colleges Act of 1862, also known as the First Morrill Act, supplied land and federal funds to institutions that provided higher education to low and middle income Americans (Redd, 1998). The First Morrill Act funded institutions that exclusively enrolled White students. However, in 1871, Alcorn State University in Fort Gibson, Mississippi, became the first public HBCU established using Morrill Act funds. In 1890, twenty-five years after the end of the Civil War, Congress passed the Second Morrill Act. This legislation required all states that supported the idea of a dual system in higher education for Whites and African Americans to provide at least one land grant to establish and maintain a Black college equivalent to a White institution (Redd, 1998).

### **HBCUs and Financial Obstacles**

Compared to predominantly White institutions (PWIs), HBCUs are underfunded (Allen & Jewell, 2002). In a study regarding state funding, Minor (2008 in Redd, 1998) reported that state-funded HBCUs receive about 50% of the state funding given to PWIs. For example, in 2007, two PWIs, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University, received \$15,700 per student, while HBCUs North Carolina A&T University and Fayetteville State University received \$7,800 per student. These funding disparities have caused some HBCUs to decrease faculty and administration positions, and have contributed to the closing of several others (Redd, 1998). According to Redd, the number of accredited HBCUs declined from 109 in 1977 to 103 in 1994. In efforts to solve financial dilemmas, HBCUs have turned to alternative

funding and fund-raising. They also depend on philanthropic contributions from organizations like the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund to continue operating their institutions and to provide financial aid to students (Harper, 2007).

Due to the severity of funding concerns surrounding HBCUs, some legislators have contemplated the possibility that HBCUs may not be a necessity anymore (Redd, 1998). In a policy brief, Gasman (2010) contends that HBCUs must proactively promote their accomplishments and the overall achievement of their students to demonstrate the quality of education they provide to African Americans. A Congressional Report authored by Matthews (2011) stated that, despite “a myriad of problems including aging infrastructures, low salary structures, small endowments, and absence of state-of-the-art equipment,” HBCUs have contributed substantially to the overall success of African-Americans.

Gasman (2010) suggests HBCUs integrate several improvements into their funding efforts, including increasing fundraising infrastructure, securing federal grants, and encouraging partnerships between HBCUs and PWIs. She also says that the federal government must acknowledge the characteristics of the HBCU student population and provide funding opportunities that will allow HBCUs to compete realistically with schools that possess greater resources. HBCUs must assume the responsibility of providing opportunities for growth and success by reevaluating their options and organizing fundraising internally. For example, Gasman suggests HBCUs promote alumni financial support as well as encourage students to do the same upon graduation. Despite inadequate funding, Redd (1998) contends that HBCUs make important

contributions to education and society, providing a very unique learning environment to educate disadvantaged and underrepresented students.

### **Experiences of African Americans At HBCUs**

Allen (1992) conducted a quantitative study investigating the differences in college experience between African American undergraduates who attended HBCUs and those who attended PWIs. Allen examined relationships “between student outcomes of academic achievement, social involvement, and occupational aspirations, students’ educational backgrounds, educational goals, demographic characteristics, and personal adjustment to college and college environments” (p. 32). Allen collected data using questionnaires developed and customized over a two-year period. Participants attended HBCUs and PWIs including, but not limited to, the University of Michigan, University of California, University of North Carolina, Arizona State University, University of Wisconsin, Southern University, Jackson State University, Morgan State University, and Florida A&M University. Allen found that in comparison to PWIs, HBCUs provide a very unique learning environment for African American students by fostering both social and psychological outlets, which contribute to students’ overall success. Allen also found that African Americans attending HBCUs reported experiences of engagement, acceptance, and encouragement from faculty, fellow peers, and administration.

Allen (1992) found that when students are able to relate to other students through networking, supportive relationships, and multiple social outlets, they tend to actively engage in their studies and campus activities. He also suggested that psychological states, such as a sense of empowerment or ownership coupled with self-esteem, belonging, and comfort, positively effect student learning and engagement. These social and

psychological outlets at HBCUs appeared to promote “optimal” learning and contribute to an increase in academic success among African-American students. However, the African American participants attending PWIs experienced different extremes, including alienation, racial discrimination, hostility and lack of integration.

### **Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)**

Modeled after Emmanuel College at Cambridge University, Harvard University was the first PWI in the U.S. It was established in 1636, approximately 200 years prior to the first HBCU, Cheney University in 1837 (Brown & Dancy, 2010). PWIs are institutions whose student population is at least 50% White; however, PWIs are also referred to as historically White institutions due to laws that supported segregation prior to 1964 (Brown & Dancy, 2010, p. 524).

Rooted in Western European traditions similar to that of Oxford and Cambridge, Harvard influenced other institutions, such as William and Mary and Yale (Brown & Dancy, 2010), whose sole purpose at the time was to educate wealthy White males. Soon after, church officials became more involved in these institutions by training young White men in response to the need for educated clergymen in the church. Due to a steady increase in the number of institutions in the U.S., student enrollment increased, producing institutions that would later welcome White men from lower economic backgrounds.

At the same time that the first HBCUs were established, PWIs began to enroll White women. The first PWI to allow women to enroll was Oberlin College in 1837. Two years earlier, in 1835, Oberlin was also the first PWI to regularly admit African American students (Brown & Dancy, 2010).

## **Experiences of African Americans at PWIs**

Chen, Ingram, and Davis (2007) focused on the engagement of African American students at HBCUs and Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). They retrieved data from the 2005 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Samples included 1,631 seniors from 17 HBCUs and 2,939 seniors from 246 PWIs. Researchers found that African American students at HBCUs were more engaged than their peers at PWIs with the institution and its culture, working with peers and faculty members through collaborative learning opportunities that enriched their educational experience.

Felder (2010) collected information regarding student-faculty relationships at a large urban Ivy League university. Eleven African American doctoral students participated in semi-structured interviews, each lasting one-hour. Topics discussed include faculty advising support, perceptions of faculty behavior, and faculty diversity. Students reported instances during which they felt discouraged by the atmosphere of the classroom setting, in addition to dealing with professors not taking their intelligence and work seriously. One interviewee suggested that students who are marginalized should look elsewhere for support, either on campus or through larger networks, especially when they are being denied support from faculty within their department.

Felder found faculty mentoring to be a critical component of influencing success among African American doctoral students. She also found that the presence of faculty diversity motivated these students while negotiating major barriers to complete their degree. Felder found that African American doctoral students encountered multiple types of behavior from faculty during their doctoral experience. One student stated:

I think a whole lot of faculty didn't take my work very seriously or even knew what I was doing. I had one faculty member pull me aside and sort of whispered to me in her office, "I just want you to know that hip hop is not going to be around forever, so you better make sure you do something other than hip hop," as if all I did all day was like write down rap lyrics . . . As if my work was devoid of any sort of intellectual merit or rigor. (p. 467)

Another student reported:

As far as the professors go, basically in our department there is one professor of color . . . She does a lot to help students academically but as far as representation, the faculty could be a little more diverse. (p. 467)

Felder (2010) suggested that institutions composed of a minimum representation of minority faculty may discourage minority students from pursuing a doctorate.

Despite various challenges during their doctoral experience, participants in Felder's study had similar systems of beliefs in regards to class politics, stereotypes, and power roles associated with class participation. One student described feeling unable to express honest opinions:

It also meant there were going to be times where you have to pick and choose your battles as far as with your professors. Because if you are going to talk about giving the student of color perspective in the research paper, not all of them want to hear that. There were some professors that like to scrape the surface when it came to race and culture and power and things like that. When you cut too deep, they kind of let you know that. They kind of let you know we don't have time for that right now, but that is a very interesting point. Depending on being the only person of color in the class sometimes, you were the one that waved the banner and made people get rid of those negative stereotypes and call them on it. Let them know where they are making generalizations and that not all Black kids are like that, especially urban kids. (p. 468)

Felder also found that most African Americans pursuing a doctoral degree were first generation students who did not possess a "cognitive map" helping them to deal with the difficulties of the degree. Due to the demands of pursuing a doctorate, African Americans in Felder's study not only encountered overwhelming academic rigor, but they

were also challenged to negotiate an environment that, in most cases, was unfamiliar. Felder suggested that it is important for faculty to understand that they play a critical role in the “socialization, scholarship, research, and career development” of all doctoral students (p. 463). In addition, institutions and their faculty must also understand that they play a critical role during periods of “doubt and indecision” among minority students (p. 471).

Shears, Lewis, and Furman (2004) explored the dilemmas of two African American men from separate HBCUs transitioning to doctoral programs at different PWIs. The researchers interviewed these doctoral students regarding their experiences while enrolled in their respective doctoral programs. The two doctoral students identified two similar areas of concern: financial support and social isolation. One student stated that because he had access to funding such as a teaching assistantship and some scholarships, he was able to focus mainly on doing well in his classes. In addition, he stated that because he also had a paid research assistantship while writing his dissertation, he did not have to worry about seeking employment to fund his education and other expenses.

Both students expressed similar difficulties in the classroom setting as well. One student stated, “I was the only African-American student in all of my classes, so I was singled out to answer questions relating to issues of race and inequality, leaving me feeling as though I was defending the entire African American race.” Another student stated, “To come from a school where you are associated with the majority and later attend a school where you are minority or ‘the only one’ made my experience at a PWI difficult and at times unbearable” (p. 6). In addition to being singled out, participants also



reported that others categorized them based on racial stereotypes. For example, some people assumed that, as African American students, they were athletes rather than doctoral students not involved in sports. Conversely, one student found that faculty members noticed the isolation the student was experiencing. In response, faculty members encouraged and mentored the student, helping him navigate through the academic environment.

According to Shears, Lewis and Furman (2004), PWIs must consider several key factors when recruiting and retaining African American students into their graduate programs: decreasing social isolation, increasing faculty support, providing appropriate financial support, and forming partnerships with HBCUs. In doing so, PWIs will be more informed and better equipped to facilitate a nonpartisan setting where African American students will feel included in the graduate program. For instance, Southern University, an HBCU, and Colorado State University, a PWI, have formed a partnership design to help foster familiarity with faculty members and ensure an environment where African-American students feel less marginalized (Shears et al., 2004).

Shears, Lewis, and Furman also suggest that, in addition to providing substantial support for African-American students and their completion of graduate degrees, PWIs must be diligent in recruiting mature students who are serious about the completion of the program. Providing an honest appraisal of the difficulties of the program conveys to African American students a more accurate illustration of the environment. The researchers contend that all students will benefit from having an adequate percentage of African American students in graduate programs, presenting students with the opportunity to engage in an familiar cultural experience.

### **Transitioning: The Case of W. E. B. Du Bois**

William Edward Burghardt (W. E. B.) Du Bois was born in 1868, five years after the Emancipation Proclamation, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Du Bois attended an integrated school and also formed friendships with White children in Great Barrington. After graduating from a predominantly White high school in 1884 at the age of 17, Du Bois entered Fisk University, an HBCU in Nashville, Tennessee. Due to the high quality education he received in New England, he was admitted as a sophomore. While at Fisk, Du Bois experienced a very different community than he had while living in Great Barrington, where he and his family were one of only a few African American families. At Fisk, Du Bois found himself immersed into a shared culture with African American students who were of his age. One of Du Bois' most memorable experiences from his time in the South was the music he heard in both school and church choirs. While at Fisk, Du Bois performed with the Jubilee Singers. He described the voices of his peers as "phenomenal excellence" (Du Bois, 1968). Following Du Bois' completion of his degree, he remained at Fisk as a faculty member to assist in educating fellow African Americans at Fisk and in surrounding communities.

Despite Du Bois' positive experiences at school, those encountered outside the walls of Fisk were haunting, disturbing, and frightening. Du Bois contends that approximately 1,700 acts of lynching took place during his time at Fisk from 1885 to 1894. Du Bois also noted that many killings, rapings, and maimings of Negroes took place without authorities ever arresting or punishing those responsible. White society seemed to ignore and never publicize such atrocities.

Although Du Bois mastered a rigorous yet classical curriculum at Fisk, he was not admitted into Harvard as a first-year master's student, but only as a junior in the undergraduate program. Du Bois' initial classification at Harvard was largely based on the fact that Harvard did not acknowledge Fisk as implementing a curriculum as rigorous and valued as Harvard. Despite such barriers, Du Bois was intent on continuing his education in efforts to "explore foundations and beginnings" and understand the world around him (Du Bois, 1968, p. 133).

At Fisk, Du Bois was actively engaged in student activities and communities; however, he was not able to similarly participate in campus life while enrolled in Harvard. Although Du Bois possessed a "better than average voice," he was rejected by Harvard's glee club. Members in the group were very outspoken about Du Bois' efforts to become a member, expressing that they did not want a "nigger" on their team (Anderson, 2007).

According to Du Bois (1968), Harvard did not have better teachers than Fisk; they were simply better known. One of those teachers was William James, an American philosopher and psychologist. James not only taught Du Bois, but also mentored and guided Du Bois during very difficult times, in and out of the classroom. James also influenced Du Bois' philosophical teachings and approaches in his later work, including Du Bois' interpretation of race dynamics in his double consciousness theory (Du Bois, 1968; Anderson, 2007). Despite oppositional behavior from peers and social and cultural differences, Du Bois went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy in 1890, graduating cum laude (Anderson, 2007).

Instead of returning to Harvard in pursuit of a degree in political science, Du Bois decided to pursue a doctoral degree at the University of Berlin, now Humboldt University. Not only was Du Bois living in the birthplace of the philosophies and sciences that he studied at Fisk and Harvard, but he also observed in detail various European political affairs that would inform his approach in trying to help rid the U.S. of its racial and social inequity. Upon returning to the U.S., Du Bois transferred back to Harvard where he completed his doctoral degree in philosophy in 1895, becoming the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard. In response to his success and promise as a future scholar and philosopher, in 1896 Harvard published Du Bois' dissertation, titled *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*. Appiah (2005, in Anderson, 2007) states that some scholars attribute Du Bois' intellectual growth after completing his first degree from Harvard to his "romantic escape" to Germany. Following his years at Harvard, Du Bois would help establish the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1903.

Due to Du Bois' experiences in various educational and social settings, he sought out solutions to social, economical, and racial issues in the U.S. Du Bois remained concerned about issues negatively influencing education and invested energy in attempting to solve what he called "The Negro Problem" in the U.S. The foundation of Du Bois' philosophical platform was the question, "How does it feel to be the problem?" As a matter of fact, this question was one the first questions Du Bois asked of himself following his move from Massachusetts to Tennessee. Other scholars, such Booker T. Washington, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Charles W. Chesnut, referred to "The Problem" as "The Great Fear." Du Bois, in a collection of essays titled *The Souls of Black Folk*,

confronted his question, describing various social, educational, and economic issues that restricted the progress of African Americans in the U.S. One of the most cited rationales of Du Bois in this collection of essays is his “Double Consciousness” Theory. The following provides a very succinct summary of Double Consciousness:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuveil and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois, 1903, p. 9)

Perhaps Du Bois’ contributions toward confronting race dynamics in the U.S. would not have manifested had he not traveled to the South to pursue an education at Fisk prior to Harvard (Anderson, 2007). Experiencing two very different environments allowed Du Bois to examine both institutional and societal structures surrounding him, using race as a theoretical lens to employ both a critical and ethical analysis (Du Bois, 1968; Anderson, 2007). Du Bois stated in his autobiography:

No one but a Negro going to the South without previous experience of color caste can have conception of its barbarianism. It is not a matter of law or ordinance; it is a question of instinctive feeling; of inherited and inborn knowledge. (Du Bois, 1968, p. 121)

Despite the progress in society regarding race issues in the U.S. during Du Bois’ early years, in 1903 he predicted “the color line” would continue to be an issue in the U.S. According to Stroter et al. (2012), “the colorline” continues be problematic well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Cultural Capital Theory (CCT)

Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist and theorist, developed his cultural capital theory in the 1960s, based on his interpretation of the educational system in France. He argued that economic differences alone did not adequately account for disparities in educational achievement among students of different classes, and that certain cultural understandings functioned as a form of capital. Bourdieu's cultural capital theory became more accessible in the U.S. through the translation of his book *Reproduction*, in the 1970s (Weininger & Lareau, 2007). Bourdieu's theory has been widely used by researchers, theorists, economists, and educators in efforts to examine cultural and social structures throughout Europe, U.S., and countries in the West (Weininger & Lareau, 2007). Researchers have used cultural capital theory as a framework to investigate students' achievement in educational settings, including but not limited to, secondary and higher education (e.g., Carter, 2003; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Strayhorn, 2010).

Bourdieu (1993) defines cultural capital as “a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artifacts” (p. 7). He suggests that an individual acquires a variety of “internalized codes” through an extensive process within various informational networks in family structures, social institutions, and social groups, contributing to the individual's cultural capital.

Bourdieu (1986) contends that there are three forms of cultural capital: embodied, institutionalized, and objectified. He states that all three contribute to the reproduction of cultural capital. In the embodied state, capital is consciously acquired or passively

inherited from family and/or immediate relationships. For instance, based on their experiences, parents may transmit to their children information that is needed to navigate institutions of higher learning. In addition, parents may also share strategies of applying to college.

In the objectified state, tangible items are transmitted as symbols of economic profit. Orr (2003) states that individuals may use their economic capital as “a direct financial resource” and may convert it into other types of capital, including social and cultural. For instance, parents who are homeowners have the opportunity to pursue a second mortgage. In doing so, they are then given greater advantage in obtaining “creditworthiness” and are able to pursue additional educational opportunities for their children (Orr, 2003). However, one must also understand the cultural value and meaning of the tangible possessions to fully exchange them for other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Differences among the cultural and economic capital of Blacks and Whites in the U.S. can be traced back over several generations (Orr, 2003). For instance, according to Kerbo (2011, in Stroter et al., 2012), income inequality has remained constant between Whites and African Americans from 1972 to 2009, contributing to African Americans earning 57 to 60% of the White median income. Orr (2003) further states that such differences contribute to the academic achievement gap that persists between White and Black school age children.

In the institutionalized state, one would acquire capital by obtaining credentials, diplomas, or qualifications from institutional agencies that the dominant culture identifies as having value (Bourdieu, 1986). For instance, multiple structures suggest that obtaining accreditation from the National Association for Music Schools (NASM) is important and

valuable for a college music program. According to NASM (2012), the U.S. Secretary of Education requires institutions looking to obtain funding through Title IV to seek accreditation from a “recognized institutional agency.” Obtaining NASM accreditation is not only institutionalized capital, it is accompanied by economic capital. NASM is the only “music accrediting agency” in the U.S. Not only is accreditation perpetuated and controlled by the dominant group, but also in this case, it is monopolized. Thus, cultural capital is produced and replicated by the dominant culture within educational and societal arenas (Bourdieu 1986; 1993).

### **Cultural Capital and Education**

According to Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999), examining achievement within educational arenas requires consideration not only of academic ability but also of educational resources available and family background. Investigating the comprehensive welfare state system in Denmark, Jæger (2009) sought to understand attitudes toward vocational and upper secondary education. She gathered data from the 2000 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey, a worldwide effort commissioned to understand the causes and differences in achievement across nations. She also conducted interviews with those same participants in their late teens or early twenties.

Jaeger suggests that, according to Bourdieu (1993) two mechanisms rationalize how cultural capital contributes to the reproduction of social inequality.

First, cultural capital, that is, familiarity with dominant high-status cultural signals or rules of the game [is] intrinsically valorized in the field of education. This means, holding constant a student’s socioeconomic background and academic ability, that possessing cultural capital increases the likelihood of receiving, that preferential



treatment by teachers, getting higher grades, and generally performing better in the educational system. Second, children from culturally advantaged backgrounds have more cultural capital than children from less advantaged backgrounds and they are thus better equipped to understand the “rules of the game.” (Jæger, 2009, p. 1946)

Jæger, building on Bourdieu, suggests a model presenting three interrelated properties: the parental socialization effect, the parental investment effect, and the child investment effect. Jæger describes Bourdieu’s complete reproduction model of cultural capital in education as follows: 1) parents possess a “stock” of cultural capital (i.e., *Beaux Arts* possessions and educational resources); 2) parents invest time and effort in transmitting cultural capital to their children; and 3) children actively absorb this cultural capital and may potentially transform it into educational success. Where previous research studies have often only considered a single element of this reproduction model, Jæger suggests consideration of the model in its entirety. Jæger using the model to point out that, despite parents holding “stock” of cultural capital and investing the time and effort required to pass on their capital, the child also must actively absorb the capital, and then use it as a “cultural currency” to exchange for educational success. However, the “exchange rate” might vary depending on the match between the child’s capital and the capital valued by the educational institution in which the individual is attempting to obtain educational success. Jæger’s theoretical model is illustrated below.

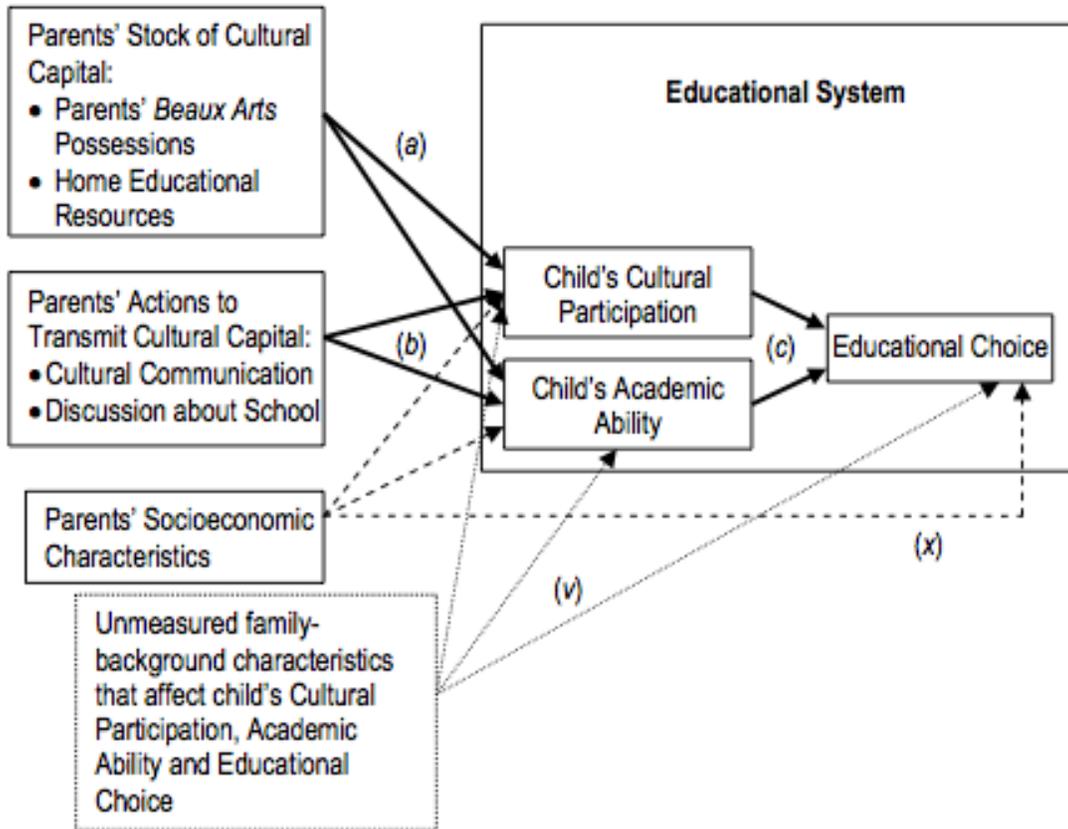


Figure 1. Illustration of Effects of Cultural Capital on Educational Outcomes by Jæger, 2009, *Social Forces*, 87(4), p. 1947.

According to Bourdieu (1968), the intersection of culture and education is may contribute to social inequality within educational settings, while its primary outcome is the manifestation and reproduction of social inequality. Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) contend that micropolitical processes, including but not limited to gatekeeping and institutional relegation, subsidize social inequities within educational arenas. Relegation, according to Bourdieu and Passaron (1979, in Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999), “is the placement of those with less-valued cultural resources in less desirable positions where the return for educational investment is diminished” (p. 161). One of the most common examples of relegation is tracking, separating individuals based on perceived

academic abilities and, in some cases, race (Jæger, 2009; Diamond, Randolph & Spillane, 2004). As a result, educational achievement returns among Black and White students may differ. For instance, Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) report that some teachers employ gatekeeping strategies that provide a generous yet unfair platform for students whose background is of highbrow culture or whose race is of the dominant culture.

Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell found that, while most research analyzes cultural capital within educational environments from a general perspective, many studies have neglected the analyses of micropolitical processes occurring in the classroom and their influence on student achievement. Darrent and Lareau (1988, in Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999) suggest that American researchers in particular often overlook or downplay “influential micropolitical dynamics” within school and classroom settings.

### **Summary: Cultural Capital Theory**

Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory is an interpretation of the function of social structures in dominant society, specifically those situated within educational systems. His theory focused on how individuals must acquire specific information in efforts to climb the ladder of social mobility. In doing so, one must acquire the appropriate knowledge and cultural and social codes, affording one the opportunity to decipher cultural relations and cultural artifacts. Acquisition of cultural capital allows an individual to gain access to various cognitive maps needed to negotiate and maneuver through a system that would otherwise seem foreign (Bourdieu, 1968).

Bourdieu refers to this particular cognitive possession as cultural capital. Other researchers have used and extended Bourdieu’s theory. Darrent and Lareau (1988), cited in Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999), define cultural capital as “widely shared,

high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods, and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion” (p. 158). Carter (2003) interprets cultural capital as dominant capital that “embodies a set of tastes, or schemes of appreciation and understandings, accorded to a lower status group, that include preferences for particular linguistic, musical, or interactional styles” (p. 138). Despite varied definitions and interpretations of the term “cultural capital,” the ideas of “exclusion” and “social mobility” are common themes (Carter, 2003; Darrent & Lareau, 1988; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory is important to this study because it provides a theoretical framework to understand African Americans’ experiences within the structures of society and how those structures may or may not influence their persistence through those structures, specifically educational settings in higher education.

Due to the fact that educational systems are composed of “multiple stratified arenas accompanied by their own institutional logic, varied exchange rates, and social agents” (Jæger, 2009, p. 1946), those who do not possess the dominant capital must find other ways to obtain access to cultural capital in efforts to obtain educational and social assets (Carter, 2003).

Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory, and challenges and refinements to it (Carter, 2003; Jæger, 2009; Darrent & Lareau, 1988; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999), are important to this study because together they provide a theoretical framework to understand African Americans’ experiences within the structures of society and how those structures may or may not influence their persistence through those structures in higher education.

## **Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

CRT was manifested in efforts to challenge issues of racism and to achieve equality within society's structure. According to Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn (2004), racism exists due to 1) "a false belief in White supremacy;" 2) "a system that upholds Whites as superior to all groups;" and 3) "the structural subordination of multiple ethnic and racial groups" (p. 7). Ladson-Billings (2009) defines racism as "culturally sanctioned beliefs, which, regardless of the intentions involved, defend the advantages Whites have because of the subordinated positions of racial minorities" (Wellman, 1977, p. xviii).

The origins of critical race theory (CRT) can be traced as far back as the 1970s, when it was introduced in the legal field (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yosso et al., 2004). CRT is based upon pre-existing movements, such as critical legal studies, radical feminism, and the Black Power and Chicano movements, referencing both European and American figures such as Antonio Gramsci, Frederick Douglas, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Cesar Chavez (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

In the 1950s and 1960s, the predominant modus operandi of the Civil Rights movement revolved around "incrementalism" or a "step-by-step" approach in efforts to confront inequity. As noted by Delgado and Stefancic (2001), CRT is unique from many other academic disciplines because it is composed of an "activist" feature that many scholars felt was missing in the less aggressive Civil Rights movement. Instead of simply hoping to "understand how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies," CRT attempts to influence change by assuming active roles in both social and academic environments. For instance, through the use of CRT, legal scholars such as Derrick Bell

and Alan Freeman confronted “subtler” forms of racism that were overlooked due to the gradual progress and incremental successes of the Civil Rights movement (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Thus, CRT was manifested as a collection of strategies and ideas that would be used to actively transform society.

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), the “Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (p. 2). Like other theories within various accompanying frameworks, scholars and theorists do not always entirely agree on the details. The same lends to CRT; however, CRT theorists tend to agree on three basic tenets: *ordinariness*, *interest convergence*, and the *social construction thesis* (p. 7).

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) identify *ordinariness* as embedded structures employed by society over time that endorse and perpetuate racism, contributing to the impossibility of curing racism. They conclude that certain approaches, such as the “color-blind” rationale, are not suitable for solving and understanding issues of race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yosso et al., 2004). Ladson-Billings (2009) adds that as a result of the “embeddedness or fixed-ness” of race in society in the U.S., the employment of a new language and constructions of race are needed so that “racial denotations are hidden in ways that are offensive without identification” (p.249). For instance, in discussions or mentions of rappers, gangsters, and basketball and football players, Ladson-Billings (2009) contends these images are not only stereotypical, but are a “coded language for the ‘threat’ we see as Blackness” (p. 249).

The second basic tenet, *interest convergence*, explains how the dominant culture within a society allows concessions to the minority when the interests of the minority

align with hidden or overt goals of the dominant group. For instance, Derrick Bell suggests that the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* initiated integration and supposedly established equal education for all students in public primary and secondary settings. However, some interpretations of *Brown* also allowed school districts to perpetuate separation of schools based on race. Therefore, the ruling was not only a triumph for the Civil Rights Movement, but more importantly, it was an illustration of how the self-interests of White elites allowed the needs and goals of Blacks to be met without actually attending to the issue in its entirety (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yosso et al., 2004). Bell further contends that *Brown* was essentially a political agenda employed by the U.S. government in efforts to appear as though it was the “leader” of improving race dynamics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while in reality prior to *Brown*, many countries in the world had already purposefully modified their social systems in efforts to achieve equality for all people. According to Derrick Bell (1980, in Ladson-Billings, 2013), interest convergence involves White people only seeking justice when there is something in it for them.

The third basic tenet of CRT, referred to as the “social construction thesis,” or “differential racialization” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), suggests the concepts of race and racism are products of social relations using categorization. Although CRT scholars support “the scientific notion that there is no genetic difference that resides among human beings” for we are all the same species (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 39), categorization focuses on arbitrary traits without consideration of “higher-order-traits” such as intelligence or learned skills. For example, some individuals of the “dominant society” rely on external characteristics such as skin color, physique, lip size, and hair texture to

formalize and “racialize” minority groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Whites have used these and other external characteristics to socially itemize and oppress minority groups, specifically African Americans, while sustaining the ideology of White supremacy (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

One of the most controversial debates of racial categorization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was the debate regarding President Barack Obama’s legitimacy as president. Despite the fact that President Obama was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, focus was centered on his White American mother and his Black Kenyan father. On the other hand, few questioned the legitimacy of Senator John McCain’s citizenship despite being born in the Panama Canal Zone in Colón, Panama (Ladson-Billings, 2013). In addition to categorizing individuals or groups of people according to external characteristics, Delgado and Stefancic (2001) contend that categorization also intersects with what is most convenient for the dominant society in response to the needs of that particular society. Cultural stereotypes may shift over time.

Both writers and scholars regard the concepts of *intersectionality*, *anti-essentialism*, and the *voice-of-color* as additional tenets of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). *Intersectionality* and *anti-essentialism* suggest that no individual is limited to a “single, easily stated, unitary identity” (p. 8). For example, an African American may be Jewish, a Democrat and a country music lover, or a White person may be gay, straight, or lesbian and a native of Brazil who enjoys listening to Jay-Z. According to CRT scholars (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 39), intersectionality can be difficult to accept in research because the U.S. was constructed on binaries (i.e. Black or White, rich or poor, east or west, etc.). The point is that all people may possibly have “overlapping identities,



loyalties, and allegiances” that are not confined to one specific space or identity assignment (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 8).

Anti-essentialism contends that no one group of individuals acts, thinks, or subscribes to the same beliefs (Ladson-Billings, 2013). For instance, I find it impossible to keep up with how many times some White people have confronted me with the following question, “Why do Black people wear their pants off of their butts?” While I have never subscribed to that particular fashion choice, such a question represents a larger issue far beyond who and how people choose to wear their clothes. It illustrates how Whites assume that African Americans are identical in their actions, choices, and thought and rejects the fact that individuals possess multiple identities by categorizing individuals into sub-groups. In addition, questions such as the one above illuminate how society expects a single member of a group to represent an entire race. Such encounters contribute to the perpetuation of racism in the U.S. and abroad, and illuminate how coded language and contemporary images reflect the embeddedness or fixed-ness of racism in society, as well as how some individuals are oblivious to their own fixedness (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Delgado (1989) refers to storytelling as “naming one’s own reality” (in Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 57). According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), storytelling was a movement employed during the 1950s and 1960s to urge oppressed individuals to confront misguided legal narratives using their own voice to tell their own stories. During the 1980s and 1990s, storytelling was used to examine civil rights issues through discussion within a classroom setting. For instance, Derrick Bell, former Harvard law professor, frequently called the “father of CRT,” taught by telling stories. Bell often used

an appendix of stories that he published as “a method for presenting fact patterns, legal questions, and dilemmas [for students] to grapple with” (Jones, 2002, p. 51). Through his approach, Bell wanted to “invoke awareness of race consciousness in American society and the failure of the law to end racial subordination” (Jones, 2002, p. 51). Storytelling was used in court cases like *Bakke* to raise consciousness by allowing those who were oppressed to name their own reality.

Today, scholars such as Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw and Patricia Williams have “adopted storytelling as an approach to scholarship and pedagogy to articulate the worldview of the downtrodden” (p. 4). Delgado (1989) contends that there are at least three reasons for naming one’s own reality in legal discourse:

- 1) Much of reality is socially constructed.
- 2) Stories provide members of outgroups a vehicle for psychic self-preservation.
- 3) The exchange of stories from teller to listener can help overcome ethnocentrism and the dysconscious conviction of viewing the world in one way. (p. 57)

CRT scholars suggest the *voice-of-color* has the potential to provide detailed illustrations of both histories and realities regarding racism and other inequities from the perspective of African Americans (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Ladson-Billings and Tate contend that “the voice” must be used to allow the oppressed to contribute to a dialogue that has been either silenced or misinterpreted in research. For example, according to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), W. E. B. Du Bois presented scholars with the voice of “the other,” using his double consciousness theory as a lens to assess social inequities of African Americans in the U.S. (p. 50).

## **CRT: From Legal Studies to Education**

Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate introduced CRT to the education field in 1995 to challenge traditional multicultural paradigms, and to examine how race and racism influence “schooling structures, practices, and discourses” (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Yosso et al., 2004). Daniel Solórzano (1997,1998), in Yosso et al. (2004), outlined five tenets of CRT in education in the U.S: 1) intercentricity; 2) challenges to dominant ideology; 3) commitments to social justice; 4) experiential knowledge of people of color; and 5) transdisciplinary perspective.

Solórzano’s first tenet addresses “intercentricity of race with other forms of subordination” (p. 4), suggesting that race and racism are fundamentally adopted as a means of explaining how U.S. society functions. CRT also recognizes multiple layers of “racialized subordination” based on characteristics that are not race-based (i.e. gender, class, sexuality, immigration status, etc.). This tenet is similar to the social construction thesis, also referred to as differential socialization, where race is used as a means to organize society. The second tenet, challenges to dominant ideology, “challenges White privilege and refutes the claims that educational institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race-neutrality, and equal opportunity” (p. 4). CRT contends that the dominant ideology is embedded with hidden objectives that conceal “self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society” (p. 4). The third tenet emphasizes a “commitment to social justice” in efforts to expose residual and concurrent issues of race and inequity through research and to empower people of color and other subordinate groups. The fourth tenet “recognizes the experiential knowledge of people of color as legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and

teaching about racial subordination.” (p. 4). Finally, the fifth tenet proposes that researchers use a transdisciplinary perspective to critically examine race and racism within a historical and contemporary context.

Most would identify *Brown v. Board of Education* as one of the most important court cases in the history of education in the U.S. While many hoped it would equalize educational settings for all while creating a better learning environment for African American students, it did not. It failed to “identify and challenge subtle yet overt forms of racism;” in addition, it did not provide qualified teachers or adequate funding and facilities for students (Yosso et al., 2004, p. 5). Montoya (2002) identified the following four questions that education scholars continue to investigate, related to the influence of forms of subordination:

- 1) How do racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination shape institutions in education?
- 2) How do educational structures, practices, and discourses maintain race-, gender-, and class-based discrimination?
- 3) How do students and faculty of color respond to and resist racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination in education?
- 4) How can education become a tool to help end racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of subordination in education? (in Yosso et al., 2004, p. 6)

### **CRT and Higher Education**

“Curriculum structures, practices, and discourses tend to omit and/or distort the histories of people of color and restrict students of color from accessing institutions of

higher education” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 6). In an extensive review of literature related to CRT, Yosso et al. (2004) suggested three rationales that support the use of affirmative action in higher education: 1) the color-blind rationale, 2) the diversity rationale, and 3) the remedial rationale.

Yosso et al. (2004), citing Delgado, argue that the dominant culture supports the sharing of “color-blind stories.” CRT scholars refer to these stories as “majoritarian stories of affirmative action” (p. 7). These accounts argue that all students in the U.S. compete on an “equal playing field,” and affirm that “unqualified” students of color receive “racial preferences” over those of “qualified” White students. However, while claiming to be “race neutral” and objective, these majoritarian stories are based on apparent and hidden agendas that support White privilege and power. Yosso and colleagues argue that stories like these have “contributed to the marginalization of unequal K-12 schooling conditions that have lead to minimal college access” (p.7).

The color-blind rationale also suggests that White students are overlooked, as universities select “under-qualified” minorities to maintain a “status quo.” Scholars such as Gloria Ladson-Billings, William Tate, and Derrick Bell emphasize that the “storyteller” may “selectively” choose facts based upon their objective, contributing to the marginalization of both past and current acts of racism against people of color (p. 7).

Supporters of the second rationale discussed by Yosso et al. (2004), the diversity rationale, encourage universities and staff to embrace consideration of race in admissions decisions, as a strategy for institutions to increase diversification of their campuses. This rationale claims three main benefits, suggesting that increased diversity encourages 1) “cross-racial understanding that challenges and erodes racial stereotypes;” 2) “dynamic

classroom discussions;” and 3) “better preparation for participating in a diverse workforce” (p. 8). Yosso and colleagues argue that the diversity rationale actually benefits the majority, even as they claim it helps White students become more tolerant of people of color, livens up class dialogue, and prepares White students for a diverse workforce. Yosso et al. conclude that the diversity rationale supports majoritarian stories because, although the presence of students of color increases campus diversity, they are unsure as to how students of color benefit from their White counterparts.

The remedial rationale, a type of race-based affirmative action, grants students of color access into institutions as a “partial remedy” for past and current discrimination against students of color. Yosso et al. imply that this rationale also intersects with the community rationale, where students of color will not only receive services from the institution, but are given the opportunity to develop and improve leadership within their own communities.

According to Yosso et al. these rationales (color-blind, diversity, and remedial) uphold White privilege. Some would assume that *Brown v. Board of Education* played an important role in desegregation with the goal of creating a well-balanced environment for all students. Yosso et al. contend that *Brown* created “one-way” segregation, where Black students were bused to White schools without regards to doing the same for White students. It failed to address the importance of providing equally qualified teachers, funding, and facilities for all students. Thus, desegregation in education has not translated to equal education.

Decades following *Brown*’s implementation, rationales cited by Yosso et al. (2004) continue to be a part of the culture of higher education. One of the most influential

differences between *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California (1978)*, *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*, and *Grutter v. Bollinger (2003)* was the presence of student interveners only in the Bakke case. UC-Davis minority students were allowed to provide verbal accounts of their experiences and encounters in regards to race-based obstacles during the case. This use of voice-of-color and storytelling provided these individuals the opportunity to confront the narratives of legal precedent (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004). In addition, the *Bakke* case ruled the diversity rationale was constitutional, stating that institutions of higher education could use race in addition to other factors in efforts to achieve diversity. Despite steps the nation has taken to improve equality in education, verbal accounts provide evidence that there are still remnants of both “overt” and “covert” forms of racism on today’s college campuses (Yosso et al., 2004).

Yosso et al. (2004) strongly suggest institutions not completely rely on affirmative action to diversify campus environments, but instead take into account experiences lived by underserved people of color, to help them examine how race and racism have influenced educational institutions and maintained discrimination. Scholars agree that there is no easy or clear-cut solution to addressing issues of race, racism, and power; however, they encourage institutions of higher learning to challenge their current status in providing equal schooling for all (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings 2005; Yosso et al., 2004).

Accompanying this discussion and analysis of how race and racism has influenced discourse and structures in education, Ladson-Billings (2009) suggests that educational institutions also refrain from assigning issues of race and racism to the shadows of multicultural agendas, while perpetuating “current sociopolitical

configurations” (p. 254). Failure to examine these configurations within educational structures not only diminishes the importance of social, cultural, and socioeconomic “differences,” but it also lessens the visibility of “oppressions” that accompany them, contributing to “the ‘failure’ of multiculturalism’s inability to challenge dominant ideological hegemony” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 254).

In addition, Ladson-Billings (2009) suggests those individuals who are White must also acknowledge their Whiteness, its value, and the privilege that it automatically affords them in a racialized society. Such dynamics are illustrated in a parable Andrew Hacker (1992) shared with White students, to confront them with the idea that they were no longer White, but Black. Through this exercise, White students were asked to consider relinquishing their identity of being White. According to Hacker, although students acknowledged that things are better for Blacks, none of them were willing to switch places without some form of compensation. Students felt that it was appropriate to ask for at least \$50 million or \$1 million for a year of being Black. Students claimed that such large sums of money would be used to purchase protection from the discriminations and dangers they would face once they were perceived as being Black. This exercise provided a clear testimony of the value in which Whites place on their own skin. Hacker states, “Indeed, to be White is to possess a gift whose value can be appreciated only after it has been taken away” (1992, p. 32).

Although many White Americans will admit that some advancements are more accessible to people of color in today’s society than they were decades ago, Hacker (1992) contends that only a certain “skin pigmentation” grants complete access to being considered as an American, confirming what critical race theorists refer to as differential



categorization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). While this access is automatically given to Whites, Hacker fears that Blacks may never achieve such access despite their hard work, achievements, and social class. Hacker also echoes Du Bois' double consciousness theory, suggesting that Blacks will be prompted to explain to future generations why and how they must negotiate racism.

There will be the perplexing—and equally painful—task of having to explain to your children why they will not be treated as other Americans: that they will never be altogether accepted, that they will always be regarded warily, if not with suspicion or hostility. When they ask whether this happens because of anything they have done, you must find ways of conveying that, no, it is not because of any fault of their own. Further, for reasons you can barely explain yourself, you must tell them that much of the world has decided that you are not and cannot be their equals; that this world wishes to keep you apart, a caste it will neither absorb nor assimilate. You will tell your children this world is wrong. But, because that world is there, they will have to struggle to survive, with the scales weighted against them. They will have to work harder and do better, yet the result may be less recognition and reward. We all know life can be unfair. For Black people, this knowledge is not an academic theory but a fact of daily life. (p. 32)

### **Summary: Critical Race Theory**

As suggested by Stroeter et al. (2011), to avoid insufficient interpretations and assessments of educational outcomes, one must consider multiple aspects such as race, class, and place. CRT is important for my study because it provides language needed for those who may not have experienced both covert and overt forms racism. Where Bourdieu's cultural capital theory magnifies class differences of cultural acquisition in exchange for social mobility, CRT illuminates how racism influences the structures and discourses within both society and education, thereby, delaying equality for all, including African Americans. Yosso (2005) asserts that it is important to understand how race and racism have influenced the epistemological debate of whose knowledge is deemed most

valued in theoretical spaces in education. Yosso's declarations will be discussed in detail in the following section.

### **Community Cultural Wealth Theory (CCWT)**

Bourdieu's cultural capital theory identifies Westernized culture as the "standard" for other cultures, classes, and races. Bourdieu's theory not only reflects a "collection of knowledge, skills, and abilities" that are exclusive to those who are privileged (Yosso, 2005, p.76), but it documents how such exclusivity, power, and privilege are reproduced and perpetuated. Bourdieu's theory regarding social and cultural reproduction is illustrated in multiple structural acts of inheritance and possession, while contributing to exclusion and institutional barriers for those who lack dominant cultural capital.

According to Jæger (2009), Bourdieu's interpretation of the social world is that it is "composed of multiple stratified arenas accompanied by their own institutional logic, varied exchange rates, and social agents with different capital endowments engaged in struggles for social advantage" (p. 1946).

Using critical race theory (CRT) as a framework, Yosso (2005) challenges Bourdieu's cultural capital theory and its traditional interpretations that suggest "some communities to be culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor" (p.76). She argues that people of color possess a unique collection of skills and abilities, referring to these as community cultural wealth (CCW). This CCW can counter what members of the dominant culture often perceive as the "disadvantages" faced by those from "culturally poor communities," to "transform the process of schooling" (p. 70).

Yosso (2005) states that CCW is comprised of six types of capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capitals. All are acquired from

home or the community. Aspirational capital is “maintaining hopes and dreams despite difficulty or fears of real and perceived barriers” (p. 77). “Skills acquired over time and later used to maneuver through social institutions” comprise navigational capital (p. 80). Social capital is “networks of people and community resources” (p.80), while linguistic capital is “intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (p. 78). Familial capital refers to “cultural knowledge nurtured by relatives through community, history, memory, and cultural intuitions” (p. 79). Resistant capital is “knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality and subordination” (p. 80).

According to Yosso (2005), the concept of community cultural wealth traces its roots to several sources. She suggests that Rebecca Burciaga is responsible for introducing the concepts of linguistic and familial capital, while Daniel Solórzano is responsible for conceptualizing community cultural wealth. Oliver and Shapiro (1995) contributed their perspective on racial inequality in the U.S. based on the differences of Black and White wealth. Due to such differences, people of color often experience the lowest of educational outcomes while maintaining high aspirations toward success (Gándara, 1982; Solórzano, 1992). Scholars such as Cummins (1986) and Gutierrez (2002) have contributed to the idea of linguistic capital being the intellectual and social skills acquired by communicating with others using one or more languages or styles to communicate. Some examples include translating from English to Spanish and English to American Sign Language. In her work regarding bilingual students, Faulstich-Orellana (2003) found that bilingual students acquired multiple social tools, compared to those monolingual students. In regards to familial capital, Yosso (2005) reported that scholars

such as Foley (1997) and Morris (1999) investigated “communal bonds” within African American communities. Delgado-Bernal (2002) also investigated similar spaces involving “pedagogies of the home” that students use in the classroom setting. Solórzano and Villapando (1998) also contributed to the idea of navigational capital.

Burciaga and Erbstein (2010) employed Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework to investigate experiences of people of color regarding race and class. For this study, the researchers purposively selected 16 young adults, ages 18 to 24, from California’s 9-county capital region, based on their socioeconomic status and whether or not they “dropped out” of school. Participants represented a wide range of identities: “African American, Latina/o, Southeast Asian American, Native American, White, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI), first and second generation immigrants, parents, and some with experience in the juvenile justice system” (p. 5). Using community cultural wealth theory to interpret the participants’ lifestyle, the researchers examined how participants managed their lives.

Burciaga and Erbstein found that although one participant and her boyfriend had limited funds after paying rent, utilities, purchasing food and needed items for their son, they were very optimistic towards their son’s future. Refusing to smoke inside their home, they were insistent on creating and maintaining a healthy home for their son. Thus, Burciaga and Erbstein concluded that aspirational capital is not only individualistic, but may also be applied toward personal aspirations for others.

Students need navigational capital to negotiate various educational spaces. More specifically, African American and other minority students who choose to attend Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) may find it difficult to navigate and negotiate

environments that are culturally and socially different from their home and community cultures (Allen, 1992). Due to such difficulties experienced within institutions that were not created with them in mind, Yosso (2005) suggests resiliency to be an additional component of navigational capital that contributes towards success, as students draw on key moments or events from the past in efforts to “maneuver through structures of inequality diluted by racism” (p. 80).

Social capital provides various avenues for people of color to access additional knowledge and resources that they may use to navigate through multiple institutions. For example, in order to obtain information about applying to a four-year institution, people of color may refer themselves to individuals who have already maneuvered through and completed that task. These individuals of reference may be a school counselor, a neighbor within their community, or a relative who has completed college. What is most important about this form of capital is the cultivation process in which acquired information is returned back to the community in efforts to help someone else succeed, creating a cyclic vehicle of social change (Burciaga & Erbstein, 2010; Yosso, 2005).

Individuals who possess linguistic capital have acquired the vocabulary and speech patterns needed to negotiate a given environment or institution. Minorities may possess varied forms of linguistic capital due to bilingual or multilingual influence from home and community. Those engaging in storytelling and other “oral histories” may have skills including, but not limited to, memorization, attention to detail, dramatic pauses, comedic timing, and facial expressions (Yosso, 2005). Linguistic capital is not limited to spoken languages, but also encompasses other forms of communication like art, poetry, music, and sign language (Burciaga & Erbstein, 2010).

Both immediate and extended family members, current and deceased, contribute to familial capital. According to Burciaga and Erbstein (2010), this type of capital may also be acquired from spaces in the community other than immediate and extended family members. Although some individuals may be socioeconomically poor, they may illustrate civic engagement and communal goodwill towards their neighbors who are less fortunate. Burciaga and Erbstein identify this extension of familial capital also as “civic capital.”

Resistant capital refers to knowledge and skills acquired by actively opposing challenges. Despite stereotypes and impeding barriers, some individuals continuously defy the “status quo” and resist societal and cultural obstacles that impede their success. Often people of color oppose assumptions and misconceptions regarding their background, race, and socioeconomic status. For example, their opportunities may be restricted by those who assume that individuals living in the “ghetto” or the “hood” are bad people who will never amount to anything. Participants in Burciaga and Erbstein’s (2010) study begged to differ. One participant stated, “I would describe myself as coming from a different neighborhood. I’m very proud of where I come from because it kind of makes me . . . you know, be stronger, more prepared. I kind of know more things since things weren’t handed to me” (p. 8). Individuals who possess this capital are not limited only to resisting social inequality and subordination, they also “articulate a vision for rethinking misconceptions” (Burciaga & Erbstein, 2010, p. 8).

### **Community Cultural Wealth Theory (CCWT) and Higher Education**

Liou, Antrop-González, and Copper (2009) employed Yosso’s (2005) theory of CCW as a conceptual framework to understand how low-income students’ college-going

identities interact with “information networks” while influencing students’ access to “high stakes” information. They conducted a mixed methods study to explore:

1) Where do students go to seek the high stakes information they need to be academically successful? 2) How do institutional agents (e.g., guidance counselors, teachers, community members, and administrative staff) structure opportunities to access high stakes information based upon their academic expectations for students across race and gender? 3) As a result, how do students across race and gender acquire the kinds of resources that will enable their access to high stakes information? and 4) What can schools do to become effective in assisting students to develop and further their college-going identities? (p. 539).

“College-going identities,” as defined by Liou et al., “refer to a student’s acquisitions of expectations for academic success and actively engaging in the level of academic skills that would make them eligible and ready for college” (p. 538). Liou et al.’s definition of “information networks” was “aspects of school culture that shape adult–student relationships” (from Liou & Cooper, 2007, p. 537). Institutional agents such as guidance counselors, teachers, and administrative staff regulate high stakes information. These individuals generate or hinder opportunities toward success, often based on their own academic expectations for a student. According to Liou et al., high stakes information includes “knowledge from which students draw upon to understand the circumstances of their schooling conditions and the necessary navigational strategies to gain essential resources and opportunities that further their academic and college-going identities” (p. 538).

The researchers collected data from ninth and eleventh graders, teachers, and guidance counselors at two large urban comprehensive high schools in Milwaukee and Los Angeles through multiple rounds of interviews, self-reporting surveys, and observations. Students in this study were from low-income Latina/o families.

Students in their study reported that institutional agents such as counselors, administrators, and teachers possessed low academic expectations for them as Latino/a students from low-income family backgrounds. Thus, students often sought out high stakes information from their family, religious, and community-based organizations to confront these low expectations (Liou et al., 2009). Liou et al.'s results support Yosso (2005), revealing that that racial/ethnic minorities may often engage in community cultural wealth acquisition in efforts to acquire valuable information needed to navigate the inequalities of higher education institutions not intended for people of color.

Liou et al. suggest that, instead of assuming that only students who succeed are those placed in advanced courses, schools should make every attempt to create information networks that develop college-going identities and provide access to college for all. They also recommend that institutions employ partnerships with local community-based organizations to recognize and understand that students of color possess cultural wealth that enables them to maneuver through college environments, despite their cultural and social differences (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Yosso, 2005).

### **Summary: Community Cultural Wealth Theory**

Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital theory exposes how institutional structures perpetuate a view that only "highbrow" culture yields success and achievement. According to Carter (2003), dominant cultural capital is an index of information that is acquired from social channels that are exclusive to individuals whose backgrounds is of power and privilege. Yosso contends that Bourdieu's framework is too narrow because it does not consider people of color as possessing other forms of valuable capital. Yosso (2005) presents a broad, inclusive counter-framework, allowing for consideration of



multiple experiences and informational networks that are used by non-dominant groups to acquire access to institutions designed for dominant groups. Yosso refers to this collection of capital as community cultural wealth; Carter (2003) calls it non-dominant capital. Researchers suggest that it is important that educational institutions recognize all types of capital that all individuals bring.

Community cultural wealth theory is important to this study because it provides a more inclusive framework lending to the understanding of how people of color are able to maneuver through society by acquiring alternate ways to gaining access to dominant capital. More specifically, this theory will provide insight as to the informational networks African Americans may use to acquire their cultural capital.

### **Conversations about Race in Music Education**

In her article titled “Marching to Different Drummers,” Sneiderman (2000) offered a brief glance at the American marching band’s failure to achieve diversity, contributing to low participation rates of Black students. Findings suggest that cultural differences in music preferences, along with a lack of qualified teachers at the high school level and discrimination in auditions, contribute low participation of Black students in college marching band, particularly bands at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Where PWIs tend to recruit Black students largely for sports, they are not successful at attracting Black students in their bands and music programs. Issues examined in Sneiderman’s (2000) work align with the work of various music researchers like Deborah Bradley, Julia Koza, and Michael Palmer.

Bradley (2007, p. 137) points out, “Many North American music education programs exclude in vast numbers students who do not embody Euroamerican ideals,” while most students who participate in these programs are largely White. She also notes:

Our music education curricula continue to validate and recognize particular (White) bodies, to give passing nods to a token few “others,” and to validate many more through omission. The westernized music canon predominates our curricula, while we continue to argue whether popular music should have a place in what our students learn, and which styles of popular music are “appropriate.” Musical practices from around the world remain marginalized as curricular add-ons, if acknowledged at all. (p. 134)

In this article, Bradley uses an anti-racism framework to examine social justice in music education. Bradley quotes Dei’s (2000) definition:

Anti-racism examines issues of equity (understood as the qualitative value of justice), the need for multiple voices and perspectives in the production of knowledge (representation), and the ways institutions respond to challenges of diversity and difference as the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, language, culture and religion (in Bradley, 2007, p. 134).

Bradley emphasizes that, in order to effectively provide musical opportunities for all students, music educators must be willing to deconstruct hierarchical structures and understand and those whose values and ideals may be seen as less valuable compared with “Euroamerican” ideals. She states that music educators must be willing to engage in the discussion of race both “meaningfully and directly,” as well as being willing to confront the privilege and power that accompanies their “Whiteness.” Unfortunately, Bradley shares, issues regarding race and the deconstruction of power are not conversations that many White educators are ready to have. However, these conversations are vital, because “White educators’ reluctance or inability to discuss race is, [Bradley] asserts, part of the very process that maintains systems of advantage and

disadvantage within music education” (p. 138). According to Dei (2006), those oppressed are usually not heard, turning the focal point toward the dominant group once again:

The most important question today is *not* who can do critical work or anti-racist work, but rather, whether we are all prepared to assume the risk of doing so. Not everyone who speaks about race is heard. In fact, racial minority bodies speak race all the time but are heard differently . . . In order for certain issues about the experiences of racism to be accepted in public consciousness, they must be raised by a dominant body. (cited in Bradley, 2007, p. 138)

In her article, “Listening for Whiteness: Hearing Racial Politics in Undergraduate School Music,” Koza (2008) examines the audition process of the vocal program of the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UWM). She found that, like many music programs in the U.S., “the cards were stacked” against those students whose musical ideals were different than those of the program. For instance, students whose vocal repertoire was composed of Italian arias and English cantatas were much more likely to gain access than those whose repertoire included tunes from a Blues and R&B background, for example, *Chain of Fools* by Aretha Franklin and *Fairy Tales* by Anita Baker. In the 2003-2004 vocal auditions at UWM, only 10 out of 73 students were accepted despite the fact that most of them sang quite well. According to Koza, such practices enforced by UWM and others institutions perpetuate and support *de facto* racial and ethnic discrimination.

Palmer (2011) asserts that similar to the long-standing issue of people of color being able to access higher education, music education programs are much more deficient of granting access to people of color. Palmer adds that a lack of recruiting and retention of qualified teachers in urban schools, coupled with lesser resources than more privileged schools, contributes to what Julia Koza (2008) describes as the “access conundrum,” a

stamp of disapproval denying students whose ideals and performance skills are not Euroamerican and “first-rate.”

Other music education researchers such as McKoy (2009), Clements (2009), O’Toole (2000), and Shaw (2012) present similar extensive arguments that music educators must begin championing culturally responsive teaching, which acknowledges and capitalizes on the “community cultural wealth” students bring to school. These researchers also claim that music educators should do more to execute strategies in K-12 settings that will ultimately diversify both student and faculty populations in higher music education.

### **Models Fostering Resiliency, Tenacity, and Perseverance**

One of my study’s guiding questions involves graduate students’ perceptions of their own perseverance towards a degree in a PWI, following an undergraduate program in an HBCU. For this study, I have chosen to use the word perseverance, as defined by Duckworth: “a personality trait toward a long-term goal despite adversity, plateaus in progress, and lack of feedback” (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Approaches toward increasing perseverance among students have been developed and employed in a variety of educational settings (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Education and Technology [USDOE], 2013). These various approaches use words such as resiliency and tenacity, similar to “perseverance” in my study. I found Duckworth’s concept of Grit most appropriate for investigating perseverance among participants in this study. Grit will be discussed later in this chapter.

In the sections that follow, I describe four models that offer approaches to developing resiliency, tenacity, or perseverance: Penn Resilience Program (PRP), Master

Resiliency Program (MRP), out-of-school models, and charter models. An underlining commonality of these models is their focus on changing the fundamentals and dynamics in which schools prepare a wide range of diverse students to build essential skills needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Beyond providing students with skills needed to gain access into a four-year institution of higher education, various stakeholders, including educators, legislators, and researchers, have begun to focus their efforts toward helping students develop resiliency, tenacity, and perseverance in order to complete high school and college and enter the workforce (USDOE, 2013).

### **Penn Resilience Program (PRP)**

Based on cognitive-behavioral theories of treating depression, the Penn Resilience Program (PRP) was designed as a group intervention approach. Its goal is to teach upper elementary and middle school students to cope with challenging emotions and difficult situations (USDOE, 2013, p. 59). It is being used to help foster resilience among upper elementary and middle school students. Through 12 ninety-minute or 18 to 24 sixty-minute sessions using short stories, cartoons, and role-playing, PRP helps students to refine skills such as assertiveness and self-regulation. As a homework assignment, students take the strategies they learn during their sessions and apply them as part of their everyday life. PRP facilitators included PRP developers, graduate students in psychology and education, mental health professionals, and schoolteachers and counselors (USDOE, 2013).

### **Master Resiliency Program (MRP)**

In response to combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States Army initially sought ways to counteract posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and rising

suicide rates among soldiers (Cornum, Matthews, & Seligman, 2011). Instead of only focusing on physical fitness and mental toughness, the Army began to expand MRP to focus on complete fitness, including five components: physical, emotional, social, family, and spiritual fitness. The Army expanded its scope beyond Afghanistan and Iraq to the entire Army, including additional components, both Reserve and National Guard, deployed overseas and stateside. Assisted by the positive psychology department at the University of Pennsylvania, the Army established the comprehensive soldier fitness (CSF) program in efforts to increase psychological strength, and positive performance, and to reduce the incidence of maladaptive responses following the establishment of MRP. According to Cornum et al. (2011), CSF seeks to proactively assert efforts and guide soldiers' personal growth by helping them deal with trauma and adversity and develop resilience. Although MRP has not been used within educational settings, Duckworth collaborated with other researchers to develop MRP, influencing her research with students. Duckworth's research will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

### **Out-of-school Models**

Many out-of-school models focus on providing graduating high school seniors skills needed to negotiate college preparation and completion. In addition, these models provide various informational networks to help students transition from high school to college and into the workforce. Examples of out-of-school models include The Breakthrough Collaborative, College Track, KIPP Through College, OneGoal, and Student Success Academy (USDOE, 2013, p. 64).

## **Private and Charter School Models**

Paul Tough (2011) of *The New York Times* wrote an article titled “What if the Secret to Success Is Failure?” This article investigated the efforts of two administrators; David Levin from the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), a charter school in Houston, Texas, and Dominic Randolph from Riversdale Country School, a prestigious private school in New York City. Both administrators facilitated character-building strategies in efforts to improve student success.

KIPP is a network of charter schools geared towards facilitating college preparation and skills for success in life. Mike Feinberg and David Levin founded KIPP in 1994. The first KIPP schools were middle schools, opening in Houston, Texas and New York City. Currently, 141 schools in 20 states service over 50,000 students from underrepresented backgrounds (<http://www.kipp.org>). Educators’ goals were to increase graduation rates from institutions of higher education. According to Levin, students who were most successful in completing college possessed “exceptional character strengths” despite personal and academic obstacles.

In the spring of 2010, KIPP issued a report revealing students’ academic status after high school. Of those students who graduated from a KIPP middle school ten years ago, 33% went on to graduate from a four-year-college, noticeably higher than the 8% of students from low-income backgrounds completing college nationally. In addition, college graduate rater of KIPP students also beat the national average of students from all economic backgrounds at 31%. However, to meet their goal of 75% of KIPP’s alumni graduating from a four-year-institution, and 100% would moving to a stable career, more students needed the “exceptional character strengths” that Levin observed in the 33%

who persisted in college; more students needed to learn to recover from academic and personal setbacks.

Levin, determined to increase student performance and success, turned to Angela Duckworth, then a graduate student and now an assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania. In Duckworth's earlier work, she found self-control to be a better predictor of students' grade-point averages than I.Q. However, in her observation of people in general who accomplished great things, she also found "passion for a single mission with an unswerving dedication to achieve their mission" (p. 5). Duckworth (2007) began calling this passion "Grit," which she defines as a personality trait of perseverance toward long-term goals despite adversity, plateaus in progress, and lack of feedback. In alignment with Duckworth's findings, KIPP began to incorporate Grit into student assessments. Following the publication of Tough's (2011) article, KIPP began to include character report cards accompanying reports cards that were sent home with the student:



KIPP CHARACTER REPORT CARD							
Jane Smith Grade: 8		KIPP Imagine Date: 01/28/11	Q2	Q2			
OVERALL SCORE		4.30	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
<b>Zest</b>		<b>4.28</b>					
1	Actively participates	4.50	4	5	5	4	5
2	Shows enthusiasm	4.17	5	4	3	4	5
3	Invigorates others	4.17	3	4	5	4	4
<b>Grit</b>		<b>4.11</b>					
4	Finishes whatever he or she begins	4.00	4	5	3	4	4
5	Tries very hard even after experiencing failure	4.17	5	4	4	3	5
6	Works independently with focus	4.17	4	4	3	4	5
<b>Self Control – School Work</b>		<b>4.33</b>					
7	Comes to class prepared	4.50	4	5	5	5	4
8	Pays attention and resists distractions	4.50	4	5	4	5	5
9	Remembers and follows directions	4.17	4	5	5	4	4
10	Gets to work right away rather than procrastinating	4.17	5	4	4	4	5
<b>Self Control - Interpersonal</b>		<b>4.54</b>					
11	Remains calm even when criticized or otherwise provoked	4.50	4	5	4	5	4
12	Allows others to speak without interruption	4.83	5	5	5	4	5
13	Is polite to adults and peers	4.50	4	5	4	5	5
14	Keeps his/her temper in check	4.33	4	5	4	4	4
<b>Optimism</b>		<b>4.25</b>					
15	Gets over frustrations and setbacks quickly	4.33	5	4	4	4	4
16	Believes that effort will improve his or her future	4.17	5	4	4	3	5
<b>Gratitude</b>		<b>4.25</b>					
17	Recognizes and shows appreciation for others	4.17	4	4	5	4	3
18	Recognizes and shows appreciation for his/her opportunities	4.33	5	4	5	3	5
<b>Social Intelligence</b>		<b>4.33</b>					
19	Is able to find solutions during conflicts with others	4.17	4	4	3	5	5
20	Demonstrates respect for feelings of others	4.50	5	4	4	4	5
21	Knows when and how to include others	4.33	5	4	4	4	4
<b>Curiosity</b>		<b>4.28</b>					
22	Is eager to explore new things	4.17	5	4	3	4	4
23	Asks and answers questions to deepen understanding	4.50	5	4	5	4	5
24	Actively listens to others	4.17	4	4	5	4	3

**SCALE**

- 1= Very much unlike the student
- 2= Unlike the student
- 3= Somewhat like the student
- 4= Like the student
- 5= Very much like the student

Figure 2. Character Report card by KIPP, 2013, <http://www.kipp.org/our-approach/character>

Tough also studied Riverdale Country School, one of New York’s most influential private schools, where tuition alone for prekindergarten was \$38,500 per year

(Tough, 2011). Headmaster Dominic Randolph introduced character building in efforts to transform the school culture. Prior to Randolph's tenure at Riverdale, a character building system, called Children Aware of Riverdale Ethics (CARE), was already set in place. It emphasized treating others with respect and kindness. Randolph thought that CARE was too limited. He had noticed that, although parents of students at Riverdale pushed their children to excel in their studies, parents also prevented their children from developing character needed to recover from failure and disappointment. Students at Riverdale were born into a privileged situation where they did not encounter adversity like the students at KIPP. Randolph and his staff began to include character-building discussions into class discussions in an effort to intervene in student outcomes. Randolph's greatest concern was that students needed to be given the opportunity to fail and recover. According to Randolph, "the idea of building Grit and building self-control is that you get that through failure. And in most highly academic environments in the U.S., no one fails anything" (Tough, 2011).

Tough's work is important to my study. Using Bourdieu's cultural capital theory (2011), I suggest that students at Riverdale were more likely than their peers at KIPP to succeed due to their inheritance of cultural capital. However, students from KIPP were able to use community cultural wealth in efforts to acquire the dominant cultural capital needed to succeed in school. In addition, due to their past and concurrent experiences within their communities and home environments, they were "grittier."

Similar to KIPP and Riverdale, additional in-school models fostering resiliency, tenacity, and perseverance include the Coalition of Essential Schools, Turnaround, The Small Schools Workshop, and Compassionate Schools Initiative (USDOE, 2013, p.63).

These models focus on modifying the school community as a whole in efforts to provide “personalized, equitable, and academically challenging schools” for all students by changing the culture and climate within an in-school setting.

### **Grit**

Duckworth, Peterson, et al. (2007) became interested in two questions posed in 1907 by William James: 1) “What are the types of human abilities?” and 2) “[Through] what diverse means do individuals unleash these abilities?” (p. 1087). Most individuals access only a small portion of their ability, whereas “exceptional individuals push themselves to their limits” (p. 1087). While some researchers and psychologists have attributed achievement to intelligence, Duckworth, in an interview conducted by Kevin Harnett (2012), contended that there are two concerns with such a narrow approach to achievement. First, “IQ scores [don’t] explain everything about why some individuals achieve more than others;” second, “IQ may be easy to measure, but it’s hard to change” (p. 62). Duckworth continued, “while IQ stabilizes before kids even learn to read ... personality doesn’t become similarly fixed until at least age 50” (p. 62). Based on those facts, Duckworth presented this question: “If personality evolves so much as people get older, why shouldn’t schools be able to influence the direction in which it changes?” (p. 62). Intrigued by James’ questions and her own inquisition, Duckworth and colleagues (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Duckworth, Kirby, Tsukayama, Berstein, & Ericsson, 2011; Duckworth, Quinn, Lynam, Loeber, & Stouthamer-Loeber, 2011) sought to find answers.

In this search, Duckworth identified a “personality trait of perseverance and passion toward a long-term goal” that empowers individuals to “pursue goals despite

failure, adversity, plateaus in progress, and lack of positive feedback” (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007, p. 1087). They called this trait “Grit.” Individuals who are “Gritty” will not deviate from goals when encountering difficulty, disappointment, or boredom; they remain fixed on their goals until completion. Duckworth et al. (2007) quotes Sir Francis Galton (1892) that “ability alone [does] not bring about success in any field. Rather, high achievers are triply blessed by ability combined with zeal and with [the] capacity for hard labor” (p. 1088).

Duckworth et al. (2007) wanted to measure the Grittiness of school aged children who possessed lower academic skills than their peers, but were still able to somehow surpass them on tests, quizzes, and other forms of assessment. To do this, the research team developed the Grit-O Scale and sought to validate it. In this article they reported six studies, using six sampling groups: candidates from West Point, Scripps National Spelling Bee finalists, Ivy League undergraduates, a random sampling of adults, and friends and family members of those adults. The Grit-O Scale is a self-reporting survey, consisting of 12 items where participants respond to each item by selecting the most appropriate answer, based on a Likert-type scale ranging from “Very much like me” to “Not like me at all.”

- 
- I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.
  - New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.
  - My interests change from year to year.
  - Setbacks don't discourage me.
  - I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.
  - I am a hard worker.
  - I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.
  - I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.
  - I finish whatever I begin.
  - I have achieved a goal that took years of work.
  - I become interested in new pursuits every few months.
  - I am diligent.

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Figure 3. 12 Item Grit-O Scale by Duckworth et al., 2007, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), p. 1090.

In one of six of those studies, Duckworth et al. investigated verbal IQ, self-control, and Grit among competitors of the 2005 Scripps National Spelling Bee finalists, ranging from age 7 to 15. Of 273 finalists, 175 participated in this study. Duckworth et al. found Grit to be an indicator of advancement to higher rounds in the competition. “Gritty finalists outperformed their less gritty peers in part because they studied longer,” suggesting that Grit and verbal IQ were not strongly related (p. 1097). The internal reliability coefficient in this sample was  $\alpha = .80$ . Figure 4 is an illustration of the responses to a self-report questionnaire by finalists of the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

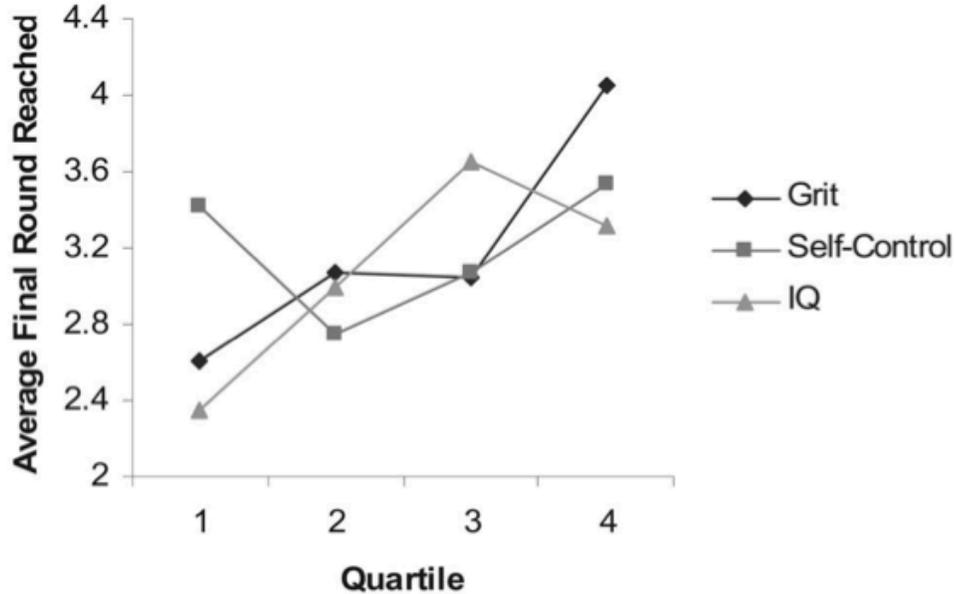


Figure 4. Scripps' National Spelling Bee Finalists by Duckworth & Quinn, 2009, *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 91(2), p. 171.

After recognizing that the Grit-O Scale only revealed a predictive value and how it influences achievement, Duckworth and Quinn (2009) sought to create a more reliable psychometric tool of measurement. Identical to the six previous studies reported in Duckworth et al. (2007), Duckworth and Quinn used six sampling groups (the classes of 2008 and 2010 candidates at West Point, Scripps National Spelling Bee finalists from 2005 and 2006, a random sampling of adults, and friends and family members of those adults) to develop and validate the Grit-S Scale, also referred to the short Grit scale, consisting of 8 items (Figure 5, below). Among these studies, Grit accounted for an average of 4% of the variance in success outcomes, educational attainment, retention, and ranking.

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New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.

Setbacks don't discourage me.

I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.

I am a hard worker.

I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.

I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.

I finish whatever I begin.

I am diligent.

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Figure 5. Grit-S Scale by Duckworth & Quinn, (2009), *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 91(2).

Duckworth and Quinn's (2009) investigation of Grit among West Point candidates involved administering candidates the Grit-S Scale embedded in a larger survey. Two samples were used for this study, 1,218 from the class of 2008 and 1,308 from the class of 2010. At least 84% of participants were of the average age of 19. Those accepted into West Point are tasked with negotiating both physical and mental tasks, like "Beast Barracks," a six-week basic training course ending with a 12-mile road march, designed to transition cadets from civilian life to Army life through various endurance and mental tasks with special attention to detail. The Beast is similar to the training one receives in a 10-week basic combat training course. Consideration for candidacy into West Point requires prospective candidates to submit an application packet that include a candidates' high school rank, SAT score, participation in extracurricular activities, and a

standardized physical fitness test. Totaling these scores represents a candidates' Whole Score.

At the end of the year, the researchers compared initial scores on the Grit scale with students who completed the first year, and found a close correlation of Grit scores with persistence. Some candidates with high Whole Scores also had low scores in Grit, while some candidates with a low Whole Score had a higher Grit score. Only candidates in quartile 2 produced scores that overlapped. Figure 6 illustrates how Grit, skill, and intelligence contributed towards achievement of the participants in this study. These findings also illustrate that all individuals possess Grit in varying degrees.

Responses from cadets revealed that higher Grit scores allowed some to surpass their peers who possessed higher academic and physical fitness scores prior to their acceptance into West Point (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Duckworth and Quinn's (2009) findings suggested Grit to be a predictor of retention. Internal consistency with alphas ranged from .73 to .83. More specifically, the consistency of *interest* reported alphas ranging from .73 to .79. The consistency of *effort* reported alphas values ranging from .60 to .78 (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009).



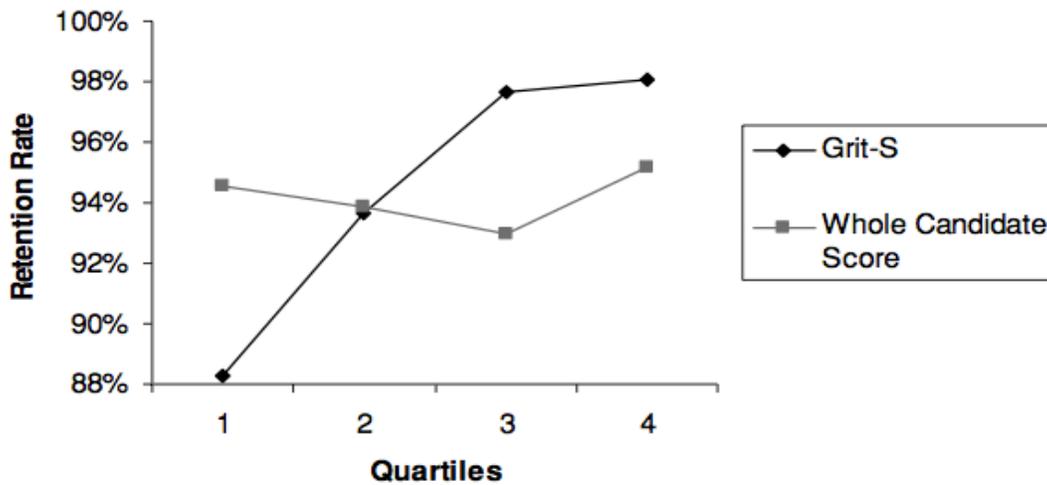


Figure 6. West Point Candidates by Duckworth & Quinn, 2009, *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 91(2), p. 171.

In other studies conducted in this six-study series, Duckworth and Quinn (2009) found Grit-S to be associated with higher educational attainment and fewer career changes among adults. Among adolescents, they found Grit-S to predict GPA and time devoted towards watching television. In regards to the Scripps National Spelling Bee finalists, Duckworth and Quinn found Grit-S to predict advancement to the finals.

Duckworth, Kirby, et al. (2011) recreated the study conducted by Duckworth and Quinn (2009) in efforts to investigate deliberate practice, self-control, and Grit among finalists of the 2006 Scripps National Bee (average age 12). Effective deliberate practice strategies resemble those that require an individual to engage in solitary practice without the aid of others. and “entails engaging in a focused, typically planned training activity” (Duckworth, Kirby, et al., 2011, p.174). They defined self-control as “the ability to resist temptation and control impulses” (Duckworth et al., 2007, p. 1089). Of 274 finalists, 190 participated in this study.

When compared to other indicators of success, Grit outscored “self-control” and “IQ.” Duckworth, Kirby, et al. found that IQ does not measure maximal intelligence, and it does not determine an individual’s future outcome, academically or socially.

Researchers found individuals who subscribed to effective deliberate practice strategies to be grittier than their peers. They speculated that this may be due to the spelling finalists’ commitment to engaging in longer study and more challenging assignments. Duckworth contends that all individuals in the world possess some Grit; however, individuals who are “grittier” deliberately focus on more difficult and less intrinsically motivating strategies to achieve their goals.

#### **Grit: African American Males at PWIs**

Recently, Strayhorn (2013) conducted the first study using the Grit scale to investigate the influence of Grit in comparison to traditional measures of academic success (i.e. high school GPA, SAT, ACT) among African American males. He sampled 140 African American males enrolled at a large public research PWI; 61% were first generation students and, of those, 35% grew up in urban neighborhoods.

Results of this study revealed that Grit was positively related to participants’ academic performance, and was a positive predictor of achievement in areas that were far beyond participants’ performance. Thus, “grittier” African American males “earned higher grades in college even when compared to peers with similar high school GPAs, ACT scores, and aspirations” (Strayhorn, 2013, p. 7). Strayhorn (2013) found that Grit influenced not only student’s grades, but it also increased students’ perception of themselves in regards to self-awareness and sense of self-efficacy.

To improve performance and success of African American males in higher education, Strayhorn offered several recommendations. First, parents and mentors of African American boys could talk with them about the importance of hard work and perseverance, dispelling any myths that assume the success of “natural talent” or “sheer genius” over sustained effort. Additionally, faculty could consider providing structured opportunities where African American males could engage in vicarious groups (e.g. watching others persevere despite distractions), such as working groups, listening to guest speakers, or learning from a mentor. In addition, program advisors might consider teaching African American males how to regulate effort over longer periods of time, to manage time well, and to set short-term goals. Such skills can be fostered through fraternity gatherings, Black Male Initiative meetings, and other groups such as Student African American Brotherhood.

**Summary: Perseverance and Grit**

Multiple models focus on facilitating perseverance, tenacity, and persistence within an educational setting, in efforts to influence school culture and attitudes among students. Specifically focusing on perseverance and how it has influenced achievement among various populations, Duckworth has defined Grit as a personality trait of perseverance and passion toward a long-term goal despite adversity, plateaus in progress, and lack of feedback. This concept was important to my study because it allowed me to understand and assess perceptions one facet of perseverance among African Americans in multiple environments.

## Chapter Summary

From the implementation of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 to the case of *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin (2012)*, multiple political, social, and legal issues have influenced educational opportunities for African Americans. Although prior to 1964, HBCU's mission was exclusively to educate Blacks, they have more recently tasked themselves to also provide other minorities and underrepresented students the opportunity to pursue a post-secondary education. This history allowed me to assess the progress of African Americans by comparing past and present settings in society and education.

Similar to Du Bois' transitional experiences from New England to Fisk University and from Fisk to Harvard University, parallel experiences have been found in transitional experiences of African Americans from HBCUs to PWIs. Despite the fact that Du Bois experienced extreme social, cultural, and academic differences while transitioning from an HBCU to a PWI, he persevered and eventually earned a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Cultural capital theory explains how dominant cultural relations and artifacts are acquired through specified networks based on class and socioeconomic status, and community cultural wealth theory illuminates and extends power and inclusivity to those who are excluded. Where race and education intersect, critical race theory provides strategies needed to analyze and challenge structures and discourses within both societal and educational arenas. These theoretical lenses provided language to form a bridge of empathy among both dominant and non-dominant cultures.

While multiple approaches have been developed to increase perseverance within a variety of educational settings, Angela Duckworth's approach to investigating Grit allowed me as the researcher to investigate participants' self-perceptions of degree perseverance in this study. Collectively, literature reviewed in this study provided both a framework and an understanding of the experiences of African Americans transitioning from an undergraduate music program at an HBCU to a graduate music program at a PWI.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This study examines how academic, social, and cultural aspects of college experience influence perseverance among African Americans who have transitioned or are transitioning from undergraduate music programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to graduate music programs at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). In this chapter, I describe my choice of research method and research. Then I provide criteria for selection of participants. Next, I describe the methods for data collection, analysis, and creation of portraits. Last, I provide an outline of procedures for ensuring trustworthiness and ethical research and a timeline for completion of the study.

#### **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative researchers formulate understanding based on constructivist views of the world, accompanied by their own specific beliefs and philosophical assumptions. Therefore, qualitative researchers should be concerned with “becoming aware of these assumptions and beliefs and deciding whether we will actively incorporate them into our qualitative studies” (Creswell, 2013, p. 15).

One of the epistemological assumptions of qualitative inquiry is that participants individually and collectively construct their understanding regarding a given phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). This means that each participant in this study will possess varied understandings and beliefs about the experiences of their transition that have contributed to their own perseverance. To understand how multiple participants construct the world around them, the researcher must gain access to the participants’ individual

perspectives (Glesne, 2011). In this study, I examined the experiences that eight African American men encountered while transitioning from an undergraduate music program at an HBCU to a graduate music program at a PWI. More specifically, I sought to understand which social, cultural, and academic aspects of their experiences within these different institutional environments influenced their perceptions of their own degree perseverance.

Qualitative inquiry is appropriate for this study because it “empower[s] participants to share their stories and minimize[s] the power relationships that often exist between the researcher and participants in a study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). Glesne recommends the researcher consider not only their role as researcher, but also as learner.

As a researcher, you are a curious student who comes to learn from and with research participants. You do not come as an expert or authority. If you are so perceived, then your respondents will not feel encouraged to be as forthcoming as they can be. As a learner, you are expected to listen; as an expert or authority, you are expected to talk. The differences between the two roles are enormous. (Glesne, 2011, p. 60)

In this study, I consider participants as experts in knowing their experience, and encouraged them to share their knowledge with me.

As qualitative researchers our own experiences and assumptions have the ability to “shape how we formulate our problem and research questions to study and how we seek information to answer the questions” (Huff, 2009 in Creswell, 2013, p.18). Thus, it is important that researchers understand that they are the research instrument and any data gathered and interpreted may be influenced by their pre-existing social constructs. Therefore, researchers have an obligation to reveal their assumptions about the experiences with the phenomenon under study. Glesne (2011) refers to this process as

reflexivity. As a qualitative researcher, I recognized and identified my own potential assumptions and perspectives that may have influenced this study in Chapter One and the trustworthiness section of this chapter. I continued to reflect on my experiences with HBCUs and PWIs and transitioning between degree programs throughout the study. I will further discuss my research perspectives in the trustworthiness section of this chapter. Qualitative inquiry allowed me to address this study's research questions, interpret data gathered from in-depth interviews, documents, and artifacts, and to construct shared understandings of the participants' transition experiences and degree perseverance (Creswell, 2013).

### **Phenomenology**

A phenomenological approach was most appropriate for this study because, as the researcher, I sought to investigate lived experiences of individuals and their perceptions of the lifeworld within those experiences (Van Manen, 1990). My inquiry was guided by my research questions pertaining to a particular experience: What are the experiences of African Americans who have transitioned from undergraduate music programs at HBCUs to graduate music programs at PWIs? How do these students compare academic, social, and cultural aspects of their experiences within two institutional environments? What are these students' self-perceptions of their own degree perseverance? What social, cultural, and academic aspects of their experiences influence perseverance among African Americans who have transitioned from undergraduate music programs at HBCUs to graduate music programs at PWIs?

In phenomenology the researcher must “grasp the very nature of the thing” or “object of human experience” (Creswell, 2013, p.177)—the essence of the phenomenon.



Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research that allows the researcher to report the experiences of individuals experiencing a phenomenon. More specifically, phenomenology is the study of the essence of a phenomenon, “a linguistic construction” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 39). This construction permits the researcher to come to terms with the experience within itself “through the study of the ways in which it appears . . .” (Hegel, 1977, in van Manen, 1990, p. 183). In this study, the phenomenon is the experience of transitioning from an undergraduate music program at an HBCU to a graduate music program to a PWI.

### **Foundations of Phenomenological Research**

The term “phenomenology appeared in Immanuel Kant’s writings” as early as 1765 (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). Moustakas states that the term “phenomenon” was derived from the Greek word *phaenesthai*, meaning “to flare up, to show itself, to appear” (p. 26). Similarly, Heidegger suggested that “phenomenon” comes from the word *phanio*, meaning “to bring to light, to place in brightness, to show itself in itself, and the totality of what lies before us in the light of day” (Moustakas, p. 26). Georg Wilhelm Frederick Hegel, a German philosopher, constructed phenomenology’s “technical” meaning, “knowledge as it appears to the consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one’s immediate awareness and experiences” (Moustakas, p. 26).

Kafle (2011) identifies three approaches within western phenomenology: transcendental, existentialist, and hermeneutic. Transcendental phenomenology “adheres to the notion that experience is to be transcended to discover reality” (p. 186). Within this school of phenomenology, the researcher must “suspend” or raise their own prejudices in

efforts to reach “the core or essence through the state of pure consciousness” (p. 186).

This process, called reduction, allows the researcher to free themselves of any biases and prejudgments that may obstruct their capacity to understand the experience, whether real or not (Van Manen, 1990).

Existentialist phenomenology seeks to understand human existence. When compared to the other two forms identified by Kafle, it is the youngest, only adopted in the twentieth century. Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and Husserl informed this approach (<https://www.seattleu.edu/artsci/map/prospective-students/existential-phenom/>), which is also used heavily in psychology. Unlike a transcendental approach, existentialist phenomenology rejects the idea that the study of a person can be accomplished through reduction. Instead, existentialist seeks to understand an in-depth understanding of human existence through a thorough examination of both action and experience.

Hermeneutic phenomenology “aims to produce rich textual descriptions of the experiencing of selected phenomena in the lifeworld of individuals that are able to connect with the experience of all of us collectively” (Smith, 1997, p. 80, in Kafle, 2011, p. 191). For this study, I have chosen the latter approach to investigate participants’ lived experiences of the phenomenon.

### **Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

Hermeneutic phenomenology allows the researcher to thoroughly investigate, interpret, and mediate between lived experiences as they relate to the phenomenon, bringing to light the essence of the experience (Van Manen, 1990). This approach seeks to understand the meaning of the experience through thoroughly analyzing shared stories. Van Manen (1997) suggests that the researcher invests in orientation, strength, richness,

and depth to enhance the quality of hermeneutic research. Orientation refers to how the researcher positions him or herself in the participants' world and their stories. Strength includes the capacity of the text to "represent the core intention of the understanding of the inherent meanings as expressed by the research participants through their stories" (Kafle, 2011, p. 196). Richness denotes the meaning of the participants and how it is transmitted through the text. Similar to the latter, depth refers to "the ability of the text to penetrate down and express the best of the intentions of the participants" (p. 196). However, to further enhance the quality of hermeneutic research, the researcher should continuously engage in reading, reflective writing, and interpreting throughout the study. Laverty (2003, in Kafle, 2011) refers to this process as "the hermeneutic cycle." Hermeneutic phenomenology is most appropriate for this study because it allows me to provide descriptive accounts of participants' lived experiences, bringing to light meaning or the essence of each experience within the phenomenon.

### **Exploratory Study**

Prior to this dissertation, I conducted a phenomenological exploratory study investigating the transition experiences of African Americans from undergraduate programs at HBCUs to graduate music programs at PWIs in my qualitative research class (McCall, 2013). Three questions guided this study:

- 1) What are the experiences of African American students transitioning from undergraduate music programs at HBCUs to graduate music programs at PWIs?
- 2) Of those experiences, what academic, social, and cultural dimensions influence student achievement among African American students transitioning from undergraduate music programs at HBCUs to graduate music programs at PWIs?

- 3) How are African American students able to overcome academic, social, and cultural adversity while negotiating institutional change?

Due to the fact that there are only 105 HBCUs, representing 2.3% of the 4,495 institutions of higher learning in the U.S (Matthews, 2011), and only 74 HBCUs offer music degrees (NASM, 2013), participant recruitment proved to be an issue. I emailed an invitation to participate and my contact information to faculty members at 74 HBCUs asking them to forward the information to students who met the criteria of the study:

- 1) Self-identified as African American
- 2) Earned an undergraduate music degree from an HBCU
- 3) Currently enrolled in or already completed a master's degree program at a graduate music program at a PWI

This method of recruitment failed—only one student responded. I then posted the recruitment script and my contact information on the Minority Band Directors' National Association (MBDNA) page on Facebook, requesting volunteers, using snowball sampling. Nine individuals interested in participating in the study contacted me. From these volunteers and the first student who responded, I selected four participants for the exploratory study based on availability. At the time, three participants were band directors and one was enrolled into a graduate music program at a PWI. Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed. I analyzed the data gathered in both a within- and cross-case analyses.

This study revealed three primary themes: misconceptions and assumptions, a concern for better resources for students at HBCUs, and the importance of perseverance and resisting negativity. All participants of this study expressed a need for professors and

fellow peers at PWIs to unlearn and dispel assumptions regarding African American students who transitioned to PWIs from HBCUs. Participants also stated that at some point during their graduate experience at a PWI, they had been overlooked and or ignored by peers and faculty.

In addition, participants shared similar concerns for better resources and more proactive learning environments at HBCUs. More specifically, they expressed a sense of urgency for HBCUs to better prepare students to assume roles at predominately White K-12 schools. While their experiences within the context of a “high step,” “traditional,” or “show band” settings were important to participants, they stressed that they and many of their peers were not equipped with the knowledge and skill needed to teach in a “corps style” marching band setting.

Participants collectively emphasized the idea of perseverance and “pushing ahead,” despite their individual challenges. Although perseverance and pushing ahead were highlighted and incorporated into the culture of HBCUs, participants stated that perseverance was also introduced to them prior to attending college; teachers, community members, friends, and family members instilled it in them. The method and findings from the exploratory study informed the design and purpose of this dissertation.

### **Participant Selection**

When considering participants, “selection should take into account the feasibility of access and data collection, research relationships with participants, validity concerns, and ethics” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 99). Only 74 HBCUs offer an undergraduate degree in music. Student populations at HBCUs range from several hundred to approximately 10,620. Considering Maxwell’s suggestions, and based on my experiences with my

exploratory study, I chose snowball and purposive sampling as the most appropriate approach for the selection of participants for this study. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), as cited by Creswell (2013), snowball sampling, also referred to as chain sampling, “identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich” (p. 158). Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling approach that allows the researcher to purposefully select individuals based on specific criteria.

According to Creswell (2013), phenomenological research presents specific challenges, including finding individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, as well as obtaining the required number of individuals needed to conduct a phenomenological study. Polkinghorne (1989, in Creswell, 2013) suggests that researchers consider recruiting 5 to 25 participants for their study. Initially, I employed snowball sampling to acquire participants for this study. I employed one snowball sampling technique where I contacted music professors at HBCUs asking them to forward the recruitment script to prospective participants, accompanied by my contact information (see Appendix A). I also asked those individuals to forward both the recruitment script and my contact information to other possible participants. These efforts identified only one participant who was also a professor at a large HBCU. In efforts to acquire additional prospective participants, I used a second snowballing approach by posting the recruitment script and my contact information on online social networks (i.e., Facebook pages of HBCUs BandHead, Minority Band Directors National Association (MBDNA), Sigma Alpha Iota, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, Tau Beta Sigma, Kappa Kappa Psi, and Delta Omicron) (see Appendix A). Interested participants who contacted me were encouraged to share each

post with other individuals who met the criteria below. Most of the participants of this study were acquired using the latter approach. Both recruitment approaches employed the following participant criteria:

- 1) Self-identified as African American
- 2) Earned an undergraduate music degree from an HBCU
- 3) Currently enrolled in or already completed a master's degree program at a graduate music program at a PWI

Prospective participants on Facebook directly contacted me, informing me of their interest of becoming a participant in this study. They also forwarded my contact information to other possible participants, instructing them to contact me. In addition, they recommended that I contact other individuals who met the criteria, but who were not connected to Facebook. I gathered participants for this study from January to June 2014. Initially, a total of 16 potential participants agreed to participate in this study. Participants included male and female music educators whose expertise focused on wind band, music technology, private lesson, choral, guitar, and general music instruction. At the time of participant recruitment, their ages ranged from 24 to 50. Their socioeconomic status during their childhood to adolescence ranged from lower- to middle-class in suburban, urban, military, and rural settings.

After acquiring a list of sixteen participants agreeing to participate in this study, I emailed each participant a link to a survey titled Demographic Survey (see Appendix G), created using Google Docs. After prospective participants completed the survey, I sought to identify eight of the sixteen potential participants representing a diverse group; all 16 completed the survey. Half of the participants did not respond to correspondence

following the survey. Three of those were female; one was a college music instructor, another was a performer, and the other was a choral director. Originally, I planned to employ purposive sampling in efforts to deliberately select persons to provide information that is particularly relevant to my research questions and goals (Maxwell, 2013). Due to the fact that eight of 16 possible participants did not respond to any of my further attempts to contact them, I was only able to acquire the participation of the remaining eight participants for this study who were all males, resulting in convenience sampling. Although I was unable to employ purposive sampling as I initially planned, the selection of participants for this study mostly accomplished the following suggested goals of purposive sampling (Maxwell, 2013):

- 1) Representativeness or typicality of the settings, individuals, or activities selected.
- 2) Heterogeneity in the population, including age, profession, region of the country, SES, and area of study in music.
- 3) Comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between settings or individuals.
- 4) The most productive relationships, ones that will best enable the researcher to answer their own research questions (pp. 98-99).



<b>Participant's Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Pre-College SES</b>	<b>First Generation</b>
Karl	50	Middle	No
Michael	47	Lower	Yes
Nathan	35	Middle	No
Darren	31	Middle	Yes
Chris	29	Middle	No
Denzel	29	Middle	No
Morgan	28	Middle	No
Johnathan	25	Middle	Yes

Figure 7. Demographics of Participants

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected over a period of four months primarily through four semi-structured interviews conducted via Skype. I collected artifacts and recorded informal moments from phone calls, email correspondence, text messaging, and Facebook in my research journal. In addition, I asked participants to take Duckworth's Grit-S scale.

### **Interviews**

Glesne (2013) states, "an interview is an interaction between two or more persons" (p. 102). According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009, as cited by Creswell, 2013, p. 173), "collaborative interviewing provides a platform where the interviewer and participant will be able to approach equality in questioning, interpreting, and reporting," contributing to an equal power dynamic and egalitarian environment.

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers acquire and understand information by actively engaging in the field. However, because participants lived in different parts of the country, I conducted four interviews using Skype, each lasting at least one hour. I conducted interviews with participants from December 2013 to March 2014 through Skype.

I developed guiding questions for the interviews (see Appendix E). For the first interview, I asked participants about their backgrounds and experiences prior to college. In the second interview, I asked questions that pertained to participants' undergraduate experience at their HBCU. In the third interview, I asked participants about their graduate experiences at their respective PWI. Finally, in the fourth interview, I inquired about participants' overall perceptions of their transition experience, perceptions toward their own degree perseverance, and the suggestions they would offer HBCUs and PWIs to improve students' experiences. These questions allowed the focus of the interview to remain within the scope of the topic, but also provided flexibility when participants shared stories or further elaborated. All eight participants completed all four interviews. Each interview was spaced out two weeks apart. There were some scheduling issues of interviews because I resided in a different time zone than all of the participants of this study and participants were either enrolled as full-time students working towards their master's or doctoral degree or employed as full-time music educators.

I recorded interviews using ScreenFlow, software for Mac OS X that captures audio and video from the computer ([www.telestream.net](http://www.telestream.net)) and a digital voice recorder for backup. ScreenFlow also allows the user to edit captured video, highlight, annotate, and export files using QuickTime. I exported each recording as an audio file, then imported them into Express Scribe ([www.express-scribe.en.softonic.com](http://www.express-scribe.en.softonic.com)), audio player software designed to assist in transcription tasks. I then created a verbatim transcript of each interview.

## **Artifacts**

According to Glesne (2011) artifacts such as “visual data, documents, and other obtrusive measures provide both historical and contextual dimensions to observations and interviews” (p. 89). Although this study does not include observations, artifacts gathered from participants and other sources (i.e. university websites and YouTube) enriched data collected from interviews, offering meaning and “supporting, expanding, and challenging [my] portrayals and perceptions” (p. 89). I encouraged participants to share artifacts and any additional experiences that I did not observe during interviews and email correspondence. To gain a greater understanding of participants’ experiences at HBCUs I examined artifacts such as videos of marching band camp and performances, step shows, and pictures from YouTube and their respective HBCUs’ websites.

## **The Grit Scale**

Creswell (2013) stated that qualitative researchers might gather data using instruments that they designed, such as a questionnaire. I chose to use Duckworth’s (2009) Grit-S Scale to enhance my understanding of participants’ perceptions of their own perseverance. The Grit-S Scale is a self-reporting survey used to measure a personality trait of perseverance and passion toward a long-term goal despite adversity, plateaus in progress, and lack of feedback (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). I entered Duckworth’s Grit-S scale in a form using Google Docs. Following the third interview, I emailed each participant a link to this version of the Grit-S Scale. All eight participants completed the 8-item Likert-type survey.

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New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.

Setbacks don't discourage me.

I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.

I am a hard worker.

I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.

I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.

I finish whatever I begin.

I am diligent.

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Figure 8. Grit-S Scale by Duckworth & Quinn, 2009, *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 91(2).

## **Data Analysis**

### **Interview Data Analysis**

According to Creswell (2013), data collection provides the researcher a data record that allows for understanding of the complexity of the case. As stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), "Data, so to speak, are the constructions offered by or in the sources; data analysis leads to reconstruction of those constructions" (p. 332). Thus, "the process of data analysis, then, is essentially a synthetic one, in which the constructions that have emerged (been shaped by) inquirer-source interactions are reconstructed into meaningful wholes" (p. 333). Lincoln and Guba further include that "data analysis is not a matter of data *reduction*, as is frequently claimed, but of *induction*" (p. 333).

For this study, I employed mind maps and a two-pronged approach to analyze data. Using XMind ([www.xmind.net](http://www.xmind.net)), a brainstorming and mind map software, I

organized each participant's data based on its content. Then, I created a mind map for each participant's data using inductive codes, codes generated from the data. I combined and divided codes until patterns in the coding emerged. Next, I developed mindmaps for each data set using *a priori* codes developed from the theoretical frameworks used in this study: Cultural Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1968) and Community Cultural Wealth Theory (Yosso et al., 2004; Yosso, 2005). As I became aware of the importance of race in the participants' experiences, I developed additional codes based on Du Bois' double consciousness theory (2003/1903) and Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Sample codes and mind maps for this study are included in the appendices (see Appendix H). Using the mindmaps as a guide, I began to write portraits of each participant's experiences, continuing to refine the codes as I wrote. Lastly, considering each portrait as similar to a case, I conducted a cross-case, or cross-portrait, analysis, "a thematic analysis across multiple cases" (Creswell, 2013, p. 101).

### **Grit Scale Analysis**

After all the interviews, each participant completed the Grit Scale. Then, I calculated the mean score for all participants, which was 4.03 out of 5. Three pairs of participants had identical scores, with only a one-point difference between the highest and lowest scores. To further investigate the meaning of participants' scores, I paired participants based on identical or similar scores (see Appendix G), and then compared each pair's experiences, based on their portraits in Chapters Four and Five. Excluding item 2 of Karl and Nathan's responses and item 5 of Johnathan and Denzel's responses, within each pair, at most only one point distinguished one participant from the other on all other coupled items, implying similarities of Grit among participants. When scores on

individual items within pairs were reversed, as in the case of items 1 and 3 for Darren and Chris, these scores cancelled each other out to give both participants the same total score. This analysis will be further discussed in in Chapter Six.

### **Trustworthiness**

Researchers use a variety of terms, such as credibility or authenticity, to refer to the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2013). For instance, Eisner (1991, cited by Creswell, 2013) uses the term “credibility” to discuss trustworthiness in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest several strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in research: prolonged engagement and observation, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and member checking (p. 313). Similarly, Creswell (2013) suggests prolonged engagement, peer review, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich, thick description, and external audits (p. 250-252), recommending that a researcher use at least two. In the sections that follow, I describe the strategies I used during data collection, analysis, and presentation of the final report of the study.

### **Triangulation**

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers should “locate evidence to document a code or theme in different data sources to triangulate information and provide validity to their findings” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). In an effort to provide corroborating evidence, researchers seek to make use of multiple yet varied sources (Creswell, 2013). For this study, I triangulated data from multiple interviews with each participant, email correspondence, phone conversations, text and Facebook messaging, journaling, and artifacts.

### **Rich, Thick Description**

Stake (2010) states that a rich description provides both “abundant” and “interconnected” details, moving from general to specific. According to Creswell (2013), “thick description allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study” (p. 252). For this study, I collected data from multiple interviews and email correspondence to create thick description for each participant’s portrait. Member checking increased the opportunity for me as the researcher to thoroughly portray the experiences of each participant in this study.

### **Member Checking**

Member checking involves the researcher soliciting participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations (Creswell (2013). Creswell states, “most qualitative studies involve taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (p. 252). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), this particular strategy is most critical for establishing credibility within a study. In essence, member checking involves the researcher “checking in” with those who have contributed data to the study in efforts to make sure that her interpretations are appropriately representing participants’ perspectives.

To ensure trustworthiness, I emailed each participant transcripts of their interviews, inviting them to check their statements as well as make additional edits and clarifications as needed. Only two participants returned their transcripts. I also encouraged participants to email me regarding additional information that they wanted to

share after interviews. One participant emailed me to share more information regarding his experiences. I considered additions and changes suggested by the participants.

Following the completion of final edits and changes, I emailed each participant a copy of their portraits. Only three participants sent their edits back to me. I asked participants to check my interpretation of the meaning of their statements and themes that I identified during analysis. While only three returned their portraits, I able to confirm some of my interpretations of shared information. I did not share cross-portrait analysis with participants.

### **Peer Review/Debriefing**

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2013) states that peer review is “a process by which scholarly work is checked by a group of experts in the same field to make sure it meets the necessary standards before it is published or accepted.” Within qualitative research, peer review “provides an external check of the research process” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the peer reviewer as the “peer debriefer,” “one who keeps the researcher honest” by asking questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations (p. 309). Exchange of dialogue between the researcher and debriefer may be recorded in journals to serve as written accounts of these encounters, referred to as “peer debriefing sessions” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

For this study, I met with my advisor to discuss research findings, thoughts, and questions on a weekly basis throughout data collection, analysis, and writing. In addition, I had informal conversations with peers, inviting them to challenge my thinking. My committee chair read chapters of this study multiple times during the writing process, providing feedback. I also invited experts outside this institution to read chapters and



provide feedback. Combined, these conversations and written suggestions helped me to process data, discover and resolve research problems, adjust interview questions and research procedures as needed, and consider recommendations for further research.

### **Clarifying Researcher's Subjectivity**

*The Role of the researcher.* The role of the researcher is to “collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). Within a phenomenological approach, the researcher must seek to provide a rich and descriptive narrative, reflecting the essence of an experience. Van Manen (1990, p. 39) states:

A good description that constitutes the essence of something is constructed so that the structure of a lived experience is revealed to us in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way.

Thus, the goal of the researcher, according to Van Manen (1990), is to communicate a textual expression of a lived experience and its essence while acknowledging the participants' assumptions in efforts to bring forth what is meaningful. The researcher should do so in a way that empowers the reader to reveal his or her own lived experience.

*Reflexivity.* However, when using a qualitative platform, the researcher must understand that their biases may influence the very thing that they are examining. Bloor and Wood (2006, in Glesne, 2013, p. 145) refer to this as reflexivity. When researchers are reflexive of their work, they seek to become aware of their pre-existing assumptions and biases. Researchers must also remain aware of their ability to influence the reconstruction of the data collected. Reflexivity permits the researcher to become aware of personal history, and of misconceptions and experiences that may have developed

prior to and/or during the study. This allows the researcher to learn about her “values, attitudes, beliefs, interests, and needs” (Glesne, 2013, p. 156). I chose to scrutinize and realize my predispositions through journaling. Similar to reduction, this process method permits researchers to examine their biases and assumptions, also referred to as “researcher’s baggage” (Ortlipp, 2008 in Glesne, 2013).

*Researcher’s journal.* A researcher’s journal includes thoughts, ideas, questions, and descriptions related to the study. I began my journaling in 2011 to wrestle with my own prejudgments and biases and collect resources, questions, and ideas. For example, I recorded my struggles as an African American examining historical and current issues effecting other African Americans. For me, this was very difficult to do because it appeared as though I was examining issues similar to the participants of this study. Journaling provided me the opportunity to record thoughts and questions in my research journal, in efforts to disclose my “baggage,” which are further discussed in the section on the researcher’s biases.

### **Ethics, Confidentiality, and Disclosure of Data**

My study was granted exempt status for research through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at Arizona State University (see Appendix I). To ensure ethical procedures, I presented participants with an information letter detailing the study, and asked them in the first interview to audio record verbal consent to participate in the study.

To ensure confidentiality of participants in this study, I assigned each participant a pseudonym, and altered all identifying information of participants to protect them.

Through interviews and member checking, I asked each participant to read through their

interview and portrait. I included changes and/or additions participants wished to include to ensure appropriate interpretation of data.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter Three detailed my choice of phenomenological research design. I also provided a detailed review of criteria for selection of participants, methods for data collection, analysis, and creation of portraits. Last, I provided an outline of procedures for ensuring trustworthiness and ethical research. Chapters that follow include participants' portraits, an analysis of participants Grit scores and other forms of perseverance, an analysis of participants' transitional experiences, and a concluding discussion of findings and implications.

## CHAPTER 4

### PORTRAITS I

This chapter provides detailed sketches of the eight African American males' lived experiences within educational, societal, and familial settings prior to their undergraduate experiences at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). These experiences are vital to understanding how each participants' initial worldview was shaped, particularly within an HBCU and PWI setting.

#### Karl

At the time of the study, Karl was a 50-year-old who was born in 1963, making him the oldest participant in this study. During Karl's childhood, horrific acts as well as promising efforts towards equality for African Americans took place. During the year that Karl was born, President John F. Kennedy, Jr. was assassinated and W. E. B. Du Bois died of unspecified causes in Ghana, Africa. Two years later, the Higher Education Act of 1965 was passed, followed by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee three years later.

Karl was born and raised in Cowell, a large eastern city and grew up in a middle-class home. His mother, originating from a very affluent background, was also born and raised in Cowell. Karl describes his mother's upbringing:

My mother was born in Cowell and she was born in a somewhat "saditty" [snobbish] type of—you know. Well, I can sum it up like this. I want to say that this was a line my mother had in a play, but it really just sums up her background . . . "I am a Negro, the Niggers live over there!"

Karl's mother studied drama and musical theater at Hughes College for Women and Kerr University, both PWIs, earning an MFA and Ph.D. in theater from the latter.

While attending Hughes College she engaged in courses including but not limited to Latin, French, and German. She also fenced, and played tennis and polo. After completing her doctorate, she taught at Ruffin State University, a public HBCU, in Cowell. She retired as professor of theater at Binder University.

Karl's father was originally from South Carolina and did not graduate from high school. Instead, he earned a GED and joined the U.S. Army in efforts to pay for college through the assistance of the GI bill. Karl reported that his father's unit's ethic was based on a very strict set of principles that Karl has incorporated into his own life.

My dad was in the Army at the end of WWII. I don't think he enlisted until right before or right as WWII was ending. He talks about how he was in an all-Black paratrooper unit, *The Triple Nickel* [the 555<sup>th</sup> Paratrooper Infantry Battalion, also known as *The Smoke Jumpers*]. He talks about how they told him he had to be twice as good. They really trained them real well because you had to be twice as good. Now, that was the ethic that I was raised on—that you had to be twice as good as Whites in order to get half as much.

Despite having not earned a high school diploma, Karl's father went on to graduate from Divinity School at Binder University. He later received an honorary doctorate from Himel University, an HBCU. His father also worked in mass communications at a local radio station. Karl alludes to how society's then-overt binarism influenced everyday life:

My dad was not one of those "I marched with Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.," types, you know. Like I said, he was born in 1927. . . . My dad has always been very involved in different types of Black things. His TV show was on a local Black station. His local radio show was on a Black station. So, everything was kind of in that vibe. I remember listening to "To Be Young, Gifted, And Black" and "I Wish I Knew How It Feels To Be Free" on the radio. All of that was on the radio when I was little. So, that was the kind of the household I grew up in.

Karl's mother was very protective and strict with him and his younger sister and their exposure to certain environments. Instead of being able to play in the neighborhood

like the other kids, Karl and his sister were confined to their yard and house to play. Their mother also insisted that they learned to play the piano. To enhance their reading and verbal skills, their mother introduced them to all five versions of Scrabble. These games were also meant to enhance his sister's performance during debating or "forensic interpretation." Karl's sister is now an accomplished juvenile psychiatrist, also earning her undergraduate and medical degrees from Binder University.

In 1972, following his tenth birthday, Karl and his family moved from a predominantly Black neighborhood to a predominantly White neighborhood. During this time, Karl was involved in a production of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. Similar to the main characters, in this play; Karl also experienced the tensions that accompanied his family and him after moving into a predominantly White community. Karl recalls his first encounter with a White boy in his new neighborhood:

I mean it wasn't just like this, but this is basically how it was, "Hi, how are you doing, my name is Karl. We're cool? Cool. Don't talk about my momma, don't call me nigger and we're alright." That's kind of how I introduced myself, because prior to that, I lived in a Black neighborhood.

Karl also participated in the Cowell Youth Orchestra Program (CYOP). It was an after-school program designed as a 12-level music curriculum to meet the needs of K-12 music students. CYOP is still operating today. It was in this program where Karl became a proficient percussionist, studying with a percussion teacher with whom he would continue to study as an undergraduate at Binder University. Karl describes the influence this teacher had on him:

He went to Hollas for [his] undergrad [degree] and he got his master's [at] Pearland University, but he was the Blackest most "niggerific" person you'd ever want to meet. In a lot of ways I was trying to be him. He screwed around on his wife and all that kind of stuff and I literally started a pattern after this guy. If that

is what he does, then that is what I need to do. If he's doing this, I'm doing it, too. So, fortunately the track switched. But, I learned a lot of music from him. He was an absolute timpanist. He was also very pro-Black. And very much like "the Whiteman is going to do this." My dad used to say, "Whitey and the man." So, again there's a major influence, my dad and this guy that talked about . . . It was clear. "You're Black, you need to remember you're Black, you need to carry the Black forward."

While his mother was working at Binder University during his high school years, he was sought after by her colleagues in the theater department to perform as a percussionist in such plays like *God's Trombones* [a collection of seven Negro sermons by James Weldon Johnson] and other musical productions. Karl recalls his involvement on the university campus:

[The productions] were like mixed-medium shows, performing, singing, dancing, drama . . . all this is a show package. So, I played percussion in his [professor of theater at Binder University] groups. And so I got exposed and most of the drama stuff we were doing was Black. [We did] recitations from *Raisin in the Sun* . . . all these different things. So, I heard a lot of the Black poems and heard a lot of the Black authors from my mother and being exposed in this group as well. I also got exposed to a lot of old music. One of his [the theater professor's] shows was called *Reminiscence*. We did a lot of 1950s and 1960s Black music. Like doo-wop, Frankie Lymon . . . "I heard it through the great vine"—all those kinds of things. We [also] did the production of *God's Trombones*. I was so immersed in culture, even though I was going to private schools and I was with White people in my middle and high school situation, I was very, very, very aware of Black culture.

### **Michael**

Michael is a 48-year-old African American, just two years younger than Karl. He was born in 1966 in Grillet, a small town in the southwest, one year after President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 in efforts to improve equal educational access for all students, particularly African Americans. Michael is the oldest of four brothers. Michael's parents' highest level of education was high school. Following his fifth grade year, his family moved from Grillet to Balke,

approximately 100 miles outside of a major city, adjacent to Mannen, home of Phillips A&M University. Balke was a small rural town comprised of a population of roughly 100,000. Michael recalls his neighborhood in Balke:

I grew up in Balke during a time when kids acted up, everyone on the street knew who your parents were and your grandparents were. They would say, "Michael and those boys are throwing rocks at my dog!" And then if they didn't get you as far as like spanking you, then you knew you were getting something from one of the family members once you got home—either slapped upside the head or a good butt whooping. So, it was just like that. It was a tight-knit community. Everyone knew everyone.

Through his participation in church and the Boy Scouts in Grillet, Michael was very active in his community. However, that changed after Michael and his family moved to Balke.

I went to church on a regular basis—sometimes by force. I think I did a little bit of the church choir. I didn't really like to sing . . . just let me play an instrument! I was in the Boy Scouts and I did that for a good while. Then, I just left that alone because you just didn't see a lot of Black kids in it. It was only when we were living in Grillet that my whole troop was Black. And then we came to Balke and I stayed in Boy Scouts, but I remember I was the only Black kid. And I was like, "Okay, I don't want to do this" because you would be sitting there and it's like, nobody would talk to you. I remember my troop back in Grillet, everybody was tight and these guys right here, they don't want to talk to me. So, I told my mom I didn't want to do it anymore.

In Grillet and Balke, Michael attended predominantly White public schools for all of his educational experiences prior to his undergraduate experience. While in middle school, Michael stated that, although most people would have expected there to be racial tension between students who were White and Black, it was a different situation.

I remember in sixth grade, like the Hispanic students and the Caucasian students, they could not stand each other and they had like . . . you might as well call them gangs during that time. They had their cliques and those kids were fighting each other in the mornings before school. It would be something. Chairs would be thrown and the school would call the police. The Caucasian kids were like kids from the rural area, from the country. They called themselves the "Kickers." They



had on their cowboy boots, tight jeans, and country jeans with their cowboy hats. They walked around seventh grade chewing tobacco. Come on, man! Now, the Hispanic boys were from a certain neighborhood and they stuck together and man they would fight something awful. It was so bad that Black kids would stand there and watch them. We would be like, "Why are they trying to kill each other?" The White kids wouldn't mess with the Black kids. [I'm like,] "What is wrong with y'all trying to kill each other?" They just literally hated each other. This lasted from seventh grade until high school. It was just that bad. But, I don't remember Black children just getting involved in that mess. We were like, "Y'all are crazy!" We just did what we were supposed to do.

Michael's participation in school band started during his fifth grade year on clarinet. His first music teacher, Mr. Keins, was a redheaded White male with freckles. At the time, Michael was one of very few African Americans in his band class. In this particular class, Michael often found himself being singled-out by the teacher and in some cases being embarrassed. According to Michael, the teacher had his favorites and they were students who were White. Michael recalls an incident in class:

I remember we had this test, which I practiced really hard for and he stood over me saying in front of everybody, "Your embouchure is terrible! We are just going to call you 'Jello jaws!'" I was like, "Okay, I'm Jello jaws." I asked him [if he] could put me on another instrument similar to [the Bb soprano clarinet]. And so he said, "You can try bass clarinet." And the bass clarinet was perfect. After that, in my mind I had it fixated. I was like, "Okay. I'll show you who's Jello jaws!"

Although Michael did not have the support of his teacher or the financial resources other students in his class had, he was determined to not only remain in the band, but also excel in everything he did after that.

And so after that I just took off. I took first chair, which I loved because all of the other kids . . . everybody in my section, I'm just going to say it, and they were all White. My motivation was like, "I'm going to out play every one of them. I don't care how many private lessons they take, they still are not going to beat me!" It was just like that in fifth grade, sixth grade, and seventh grade. . . . That man called me "Jello jaws" and I saw the competition and I like competition and I'm just going to say it and you can edit this how you want to. I just said, "I'm going to beat these White folks. They think they're going to play better than me. No, I'm going to show them!" That was part of the drive.

The following year, Mr. Keins was not invited back to teach; instead, a White female named Mrs. Butler replaced him. She along with the director of bands director, Mr. Rodriguez, were very supportive. Particularly, Mrs. Butler's positive and supportive efforts lead Michael to many successes in the classroom and in competitions and festivals in the state.

In chair tests, I beat everybody. Everybody in the section was White. And I would be like, "You're not going to beat me." I wouldn't tell them that, you know. I'd be like, "They're not going to beat me. I don't care what they do." They were taking lessons. Their parents put money into it. They had their own instruments. That's how it was. I was using the school instrument—bass clarinet. My folks couldn't buy that thing, you know. I never asked for anything, the school instrument was there. I was like, "I'll just use the school instrument." So, I was just whopping up on them.

Mrs. Butler played an important role in Michael's success in the band program, so much so that she decided to transfer to the high school where her then eighth-graders would soon become freshmen the following year. This made it easier for Michael to transition from middle to high school. Despite the typical challenges of being a freshman in high school, Michael did really well in all of his classes, including band. During his freshman year, he made the top band at his school, surpassing all the upperclassmen and making the State Interscholastic League (SIL) region and area bands. After making the area band, he qualified to travel to the State University to audition for the All-state band. Michael shares his experience at the audition:

I was the only Black kid and the tryouts were different because I remember going into a room playing for the judge and I wasn't alone. For this particular tryout, all of the bass clarinet players sat in this huge room and the judge came in and we had to get up from where we were sitting along the wall, walk to the middle of the floor and play in front of everybody. And I will never forget that and I just never realized how many people could play at the level I was playing. We were all playing the same excerpt from the etude book and everybody was doing the same.

We all sounded the same. I was like, "How are they going to pick from listening to everybody sounding the same. I think they picked four to go on to tryout for state and I got the fifth spot. I was like, Okay, that means I'm good because I'm fifth. I didn't make it but now I know at least I was in the top five." But in the fact of race, I mean, I just remember that it wasn't that many Black children there.

Besides concert band, Michael also participated in the high school jazz band.

However, he did not participate in the marching band because the style was very similar to that of Phillips A&M University, which to him appeared as boring and lacking energy. Michael did attend one of his high school marching band's performances at a local competition. One of the things he noticed was the lack of Black people attending and performing.

It wasn't a lot of Black people in music. I was like, "Okay, where are these Black people in music? Didn't Black people have an influence on music? What is the deal with this? Why don't they do band?" So, during that time, I really just couldn't figure it out.

As Michael expressed to me of his love for music, he also expressed how he spent time after school and at home composing and writing, trying to understand it better. Combined with the support of his high school band directors, Michael knew exactly what he wanted to pursue as a career, music.

I always tried to write music. I didn't get any formal training in composing music. I just remember having my guitar and my little keyboard. I knew rhythms. I knew how to write them and I knew the notes. So, I started getting these books on harmony and composition and I'd just go through them. I [tried] to listen to songs on the radio. Then I'd just sit with my keyboard and play it by ear and I started putting it down on manuscript paper. We didn't have Sibelius and Finale; you had to write stuff by ear. And so I just started putting it down. I just remember doing that a lot. I knew what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to be a band director when I came in contact with Mrs. Butler [Michael's middle school band director] in the seventh grade.

Mrs. Butler meant a great deal to Michael. She went above and beyond the measures of simply being his band director. For instance, the concert band had a

competition scheduled on the same day in the city of Felix that the football team was scheduled to play in Burch to play a playoff game. To ensure that Michael would be able to compete in both, the band competition and football game, Mrs. Butler volunteered her husband to drive Michael from the band competition in Felix to Burch, which was approximately 136 miles. According to Michael, “That was cool and that's how I knew that they were really supportive because most band directors wouldn't do that, not for a little Black boy. So, I'm talking like that was in the Civil Rights Era, but no, it was in the 1980s.”

### **Nathan**

Nathan is a 35-year-old African American male who was born in Corman, a large southern city, in 1978, the same year of the *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California* decision. He is the only child born to parents who both attended and received undergraduate degrees from Dawkins State University (DSU), an HBCU located in Dolley, in a nearby state. His mother also received an MBA in business administration. They lived in a predominantly Black suburban community outside of Corman.

According to Nathan, he did not have many interactions with people from other races due to the fact that almost every aspect of life prior to his master's degree was situated in a predominately Black setting.

I went to an all Black elementary school, an all Black middle school, and I went to an all Black high school. And I went to an HBCU. So growing up, I really didn't have a lot of interaction with people who were not Black. You know what's really interesting is in areas of Corman, Washington, D.C., Detroit [Black people] self-segregate. To this day, the community I lived in and the churches we went to—things of that nature, I mean it was just all Black.

Nathan's participation in school band started in the sixth grade, which was a part of the K-7 structuring of schools in Corman, followed by grades 8-12. In his early years in high school, although he was in the band, his efforts were geared toward playing basketball. By the tenth grade, realizing that he was too short to play competitive basketball, Nathan decided to turn his focus toward music.

It got to point to where some of my friends got taller and didn't. So, I decided to concentrate on music and became infatuated with the [Prescott A&M University] band when I was probably in about the ninth or tenth grade. My parents went to DSU and they would play PAMU every year in a game in Corman and we would go and check it out. I was like, "I think this is pretty cool." I fell in love with PAMU. I just thought it was the coolest thing ever!

After finding out that Nathan really enjoyed PAMU's band, his parents would send him to their band camp every summer. Nathan's band director was also influential in Nathan going to an HBCU for his undergraduate experience.

Musically, my high school band director was saxophone player and I played sax. He was very good. He was this jazz saxophonist and he was from New Orleans, Louisiana. He had a master's degree in jazz sax performance and played clarinet and flute really well. I got to spend a lot of one-on-one time with him. Looking back on it, I think my high school experiences were average, but my band director was a very good musician. With him being a sax player and me being a saxophone player, it really helped me out in a lot of ways. But, individually it got me a lot of attention.

Although Nathan's early educational and musical experiences were in predominantly Black settings, he became aware early on of the idea of self-segregation and the role it played in shaping the population of local schools and their band programs.

In Corman, it's kind of self-segregated. We had about 7 or 8 all-Black bands that were decently good. Three were really, really, good. Then on the complete other side of town, in North Corman were predominately White schools. In Payne County, there was Hillcrest High School, Beacon High School, and Springberry and these bands that have played at Midwest and Bands of America. So, it was like the "haves" and "the have nots." And then the people that were good were really good. And [those] who weren't very good, weren't good at all. And this

state doesn't really care. In Florida, if you're not very good, FMEA will send a letter to your principal and tell you that you need to get it together. But, here they won't do that. It's still kind of like a "good ole boy type of network."

Nathan also stated that, toward the end of his public school teaching career in 2009, students were no longer unanimously choosing HBCUs, but were also considering going to PWIs. He further included that students' tendency to choose PWIs over HBCUs related to having greater access to more funding and the institutions' reputation.

### **Darren**

Darren is a 31-year-old African American male who was born in 1982 in the south side of Cline. Darren was born four years after *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California (1978)* and twenty-one years prior to the *Grutter v. Bollinger (2003)*. Both court cases rendered that race-based admissions were constitutional when used to diversify student population.

According to Darren, his mother is the most influential person in his life. Despite not having his father in his life and living a low socioeconomic neighborhood, his mother refused to allow Darren or his older brother to feel sorry for themselves. She worked for the United States Postal Service, but later became disabled due to health issues. In Darren's own words, he grew up in a "crazy and very bad neighborhood." Darren describes an experience that resulted in their mother relocating her sons to a safer community:

Something happened in my childhood. My brother witnessed someone being murdered in our backyard. So, my mother's like, "We have to go!" So, we moved to the east side into a town home. I never knew what a town home was until we moved. We lived in ole itty-bitty house on the south side.

Darren's mother made her sons work hard to establish their independence and resourcefulness. Darren states:

So, I didn't get everything that I wanted. I had to work for everything. I think I had to learn a lot. Whenever I had questions for my mother, I couldn't just say, "Eh, mama, what's this? What does this mean?" She would always say, "Go look it up!" So, I would always have to look into a dictionary or an encyclopedia or whatever to find things. But, eventually, I would say, "Forget it. I don't want to know if I got to keep looking stuff up."

Attending church was also a very important aspect of Darren's family's life.

Discovering his purpose and his relationship with Christ was of great importance to him.

Darren explains:

I used to always have to go to church. I mean, on Monday there was something, on Tuesday there was something, Wednesday there was something, Thursday there was something, Friday there was something, and Saturday and Sunday, maybe three or four times that day . . . Sunday school at 9:30 a.m., church service at 11 a.m., 3 p.m. service, and Baptist Training Union (BTU) at night.

Not to sound all "churchy," but I've grown up in the church. I consider myself a person of faith. I'm not saying that I'm a pastor or minister or nothing like. Honestly, one time I did feel like I had a calling to preach. I hung that phone up real quick. I was like, that couldn't be me. . . . As I've gotten older, I noticed that I really do have favor. Some people don't believe in faith, God, or divine intervention, but I do! Because I would rather believe that something is happening for a purpose than just for something to be happening at the spur of the moment. Like the whole big bang theory. Like if you say that life was created off of whim, then why would life have any purpose? I think I was created for a purpose.

Darren made his first public appearance as a drummer in church at the age of seven. Despite not having much experience as a drummer at his age and the occasional family member objecting to his playing, Darren really enjoyed playing, so much so he advertised and personally invited everyone in his neighborhood:

I'd never forget when my great aunt was like, "Get that boy off those drums!" I made everything a spectacle. I was like, "I'm playing at church on Sunday!" I told all my neighborhood friends, "Come to church this Sunday!" I got on the drums [*Making drumming and cymbal sounds*] I didn't know what I was doing. So, my

mother put me in lessons for a year and because I loved gospel music, I wanted to do all the fancy stuff. But my teacher just had me doing simple rhythms. I was like, "Nawl, show me all the fancy stuff!"

Taking his mother's guidance in stride, Darren went on to become very successful in school through his persistence and hard work. Darren began his education in the Foster Montessori Elementary School and Foster Magnet Programs. With high school in the fore, Darren's teachers strongly encouraged him to continue his education in the magnet program. Overlooking his teachers' advice, Darren enrolled in Southern Hills, a predominately Black high school located on the east side of Cline. Prior to the implementation of *Brown* in 1954, Southern Hills was a predominately White school. To aid those White families who did not want to integrate, Sousa High School, a private school, was founded. While in high school, Darren was a very busy student in addition to doing well in his classes:

I was a member of Sigma Beta. It was affiliated with Phi Beta Sigma, Fraternity, Inc. I had step practice at 6:30 a.m., then band practice at 7:30am. Then, I had school from 8:30am to 3:30pm. Then, I had drum line practice or some other band practice then step practice after that. So, I wasn't getting home until like 7, 8, or 9 o'clock. Then, I would do the whole thing over again. I was also working. I had a really busy high school career.

Darren's brother also played the drums, as well as the bass and clarinet in high school.

When I got to high school, my mother's dream was for us to march on the band field together. But, that didn't happen because [my brother] got into [a disagreement] with the band director, [a White female] and she kicked him out. And so when I came along my freshman year, she was like, "Are we going to have the same issue that we had with your brother?" And I said this, "Do you love music like I love music?" She said, "I think I do." I said, "Then, we're not going to have any problems." She serves as my mentor right now. She calls me her "prize pupil." She retired last summer. I actually went back and played at her retirement concert. She said that there is one student that would major in music out of every graduating class and that ended up being me. I didn't think it was



going to be me. But it did. She only had her master's. She said I would go further than she ever thought, even further than she did. So, [with] me being her first doctoral student, she is always like, "I'm proud of you!" And that makes you feel good!

Although Darren's brother did not continue to play percussion, he was a huge supporter of his brother. Often, Darren's brother would encourage him by telling him of unforeseen accomplishments:

My brother was one of my biggest encouragers. I can remember driving in our little Pontiac Grand Prix. I remember listening to Kirk Franklin's Christmas album in the car and he said, "Just keep at it. One day, somebody's going to be riding with their younger brother listening to you play drums." And to this day, I [have] recorded two albums. And someone somewhere is listening to me play drums with their little brother.

In addition to the support that Darren received from his family, friends, and his band director, other key yet unexpected individuals also influenced Darren to continue his education and work in music. The first was a friend's uncle.

One of my best friend's uncle was a drug dealer and he would never let us do anything bad. He would never let us skip school. He would never let us do anything. He would tell us, "Y'all are not going to be like us!"

Another piece of advice came from one of the most unlikely of places. While Darren was working a part-time job during his freshman year in high school, he was arrested and placed in jail for "hooking himself and others up, " basically, giving away merchandise:

Yeah, the 5-0 [police] got me! [This] dude [Darren's cellmate] straight up told me. He was like, "What are you in here for?" I said, "I stole something." He said, "How old are you? 18? You look like you go to college." I said, "Yeah." He said, "Man, you don't want to be in here like me. My life is already done with. I'm 35. They know my name, personally. You don't want to be in here. Don't let me see you in here again. You have too much going on for yourself to be back here. You need to go ahead and take care of what you need to take care of. Don't let me see you in here again!"

Following his release from jail, his mother offered some advice, permanently setting Darren on a responsible path:

I learned those lessons from the whole stealing thing. I got “whooped” with a hairbrush by my aunt and my mother told me something. She said, "Now you got two strikes. I don't know what that third strike is. If you lie to somebody. If you try to get over on somebody, or if you try to steal from somebody else . . . Or you just do whatever. Just know you got two strikes and just don't get another." So, I've been treading lightly. [That] happened in about 2000 or 2001. It's been 13 years and trying not to get that third strike.

### **Chris**

Chris is a 30-year-old who was born in 1984 in Ivanville, a large coastal city in the south, twelve years prior to *Hopwood v. Texas (1996)*. This court case was the only case to successfully defend institutional affirmative action policies, declaring admissions policies using race or ethnicity “to remedy past discrimination” as legal, a ruling that held for eleven years before *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin (2011)*, which reversed that decision. Chris’ father is originally from Brecker, Illinois but later moved to Ivanville, where he met and married Chris’ mother. Chris’ mother graduated from a local predominately Black high school in Ivanville and later earned an associate’s degree from a local HBCU after she was married. Although his father did not complete high school, he acquired various certifications as a painter, plumber, electrician, as well as working as a construction worker from Job Corps.<sup>7</sup> Throughout Chris’ childhood his family lived in a predominantly Black urban community. His younger sister followed in her brother’s

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<sup>7</sup> A program in the U.S. that offers free education and vocational training to young men and women.

footsteps by marching in the band as a flute player and a member of the guard. She is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in nursing at a PWI in Ivanville.

Chris' relationship with each parent was very different. There was great distance between Chris and his father.

Once I got to high school, my dad tried to influence what I wanted to do after high school. That was another reason why I wanted to get out [of Ivanville]. At the time, he wanted to get a construction business off the ground, which wasn't successful at all. He wanted me stay in Ivanville and help him with that and learn the trade. But, you know with me spending so many summers with him doing that stuff and him treating me the way he did—I didn't have a normal summer like other high school students. I didn't have a choice. I had to do it. I was like, "Dude, are you crazy? I'm not going to stay in Ivanville and do construction. What do I look like working out in the sun? Man, please! Forget that! That's dead!" So, you know, we butted heads on that a lot.

Despite their differences, Chris credits his father for his educational skills and his work ethic.

I guess it was a double-edged sword because a lot of things that I learned from him and he taught me are paying off now. But, the way that they were taught to me at that time, I didn't care for. . . . Now, I will say this, even though my dad didn't graduate from high school, he kind of instilled in me to be studious when I was young. He taught me basic things about being successful in school like multiplication, word pronunciation, and how to read—all of those things. Even though he was very hard and difficult in his tactics about teaching those things, I believe I picked up tactics in how to become a teacher and educator. That stuff kind of rubbed off on me. That's where I got my background from in being studious.

Chris' mother was his biggest cheerleader.

The only person I talk to somewhat on a regular basis is my mom. I call my mom. I kept in contact with her. I contacted my dad maybe a year or two ago. We just started talking again and that's because of my wife. She was like, "You need to talk to your dad." I'm like, "That nigga—I don't fool with him!" But you know, I just started talking to him.

Chris and his family were traditional Southern Baptists. No matter how busy life was, he and his sister were expected to attend church:

First, it started out with school and church. Then, when I got to middle school, it was school, church, and band. Then, when I got into high school it was school, church, band, and work.

While attending church, Chris meet various individuals who were very influential in his choices in education. He found that not only were they well educated and successful Black people, but they also attended HBCUs such as Prescott A&M University and Hillman State University. They often encouraged Chris and other teenagers at church to get good grades in efforts to be successful. Doing well in school was expected.

Chris started playing the trumpet in school band at a predominantly Black middle school where he met Mr. Knight, his African American middle school band director. Chris loved playing the trumpet, but he found it particularly frustrating when he could not win chair challenges against a White student who occupied the first chair in the trumpet section. Chris recalls a conversation with Mr. Knight:

Mr. Knight pulled me to the side and said, "You know what Chris? I think moving over to baritone probably will be a better a fit for you." I was like, "Why, Mr. Knight? I like playing trumpet!" He said, "Well, honestly your lips are big. You know, I don't think you will be able to extend your range like you need to." No lie! That's on everything. So, I mean of course, I'm just juicing it up a little bit, but that's pretty much what he told me—I had big lips. So, that summer I took lessons with him. That was the first time I took private lessons. I absolutely loved it. He didn't charge me anything. He just wanted to make sure I made a good transition over to baritone. . . . I still remember Mr. Knight to this day.

When the time came for Chris to transition into high school, he had hopes of joining his friends and marching in the marching band at Thomas Magnet High School of Advanced Communications and the Arts. However, those things did not happen.

I will never forget my eighth grade year, I believe at the time a lot of my friends were all for Thomas Magnet High School. A lot of them were going there to be in the band. So, I was like, "I want to go to Thomas. I want go to Thomas!" [Mr.

Knight] was like, "No. You're zoned for Falgout High School. You need to go to Falgout. They have a really good band program." I was like, "I don't want to go to Falgout." He talked me into going to Falgout and it was a way better decision. If I had gone to Leflore, I would have never had great experiences to pull from.

Falgout High School is a public school located in a predominantly White community in Ivanville. It is known for its academic rigor and extracurricular activities, specifically for its International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) Programs. Chris benefited not only from a great education, but also from the experiences of participating in the band program.

You know. I was a decent musician in middle school. But, the main thing that I didn't have in middle school was competition. As soon as I got to high school during my freshman year, there were four other people that played euphonium and they were just as good or better than I was. So, my competition jumped up. It made me practice more. It made me want to be a better musician just by being around higher caliber of student-musicians in high school. . . . Actually, I am so ecstatic that I was influenced to go to Falgout because I probably wouldn't be the musician, teacher, and educator that I am today if it wasn't for Falgout.

Chris loved and truly admired Mr. Knight particularly because he made sure that he had the necessary skills to be successful in life. Unfortunately, Chris recently found that Mr. Knight had fallen on hard times.

It's just crazy how time just changes some people. The last time I went home some people were telling me that he was a "crackhead." Like, literally. That kind of hurt me. So, I've been telling myself that when I do go back to Ivanville, I will try to find him and sit and talk with him to help him out. My son's step-dad talks with Mr. Knight all the time. He's the one who told me because we were sitting down talking. Mr. Knight was probably one of the most influential people in my life as far as my middle school education goes.

Another individual that was influential in Chris' educational choices was Mr. Neel, an African American former high school band director and then assistant principal at Falgout High School.

My first meeting with [Mr. Neel] was kind of crazy. He kind of caught me doing some stuff I had no business doing. But, we became really good friends and he kind of turned me on to Elliot State University. At that time, I had no idea. I knew nothing about it. So, I think during my junior and senior year, I went to the battle bands. I saw the [ESU] band and I was like, "Oh my god!" I ended up applying and getting in there.

During his senior year in high school after learning that he could earn money to go to college by enlisting in the military, Chris joined one of the National Guard medical units. However, after finding out that there was a National Guard Band in his state, he then moved his enlistment to one of the Army Bands where he played the euphonium.

### **Denzel**

Denzel is the same age as Chris, a 29-year-old African American male. His brother and sister are ten and fifteen years older than he, respectively. Denzel describes his family as the "typical family" where both parents lived in the home and they ate dinner together every night, except for the nights his White father worked the night-shift. Sometimes, Denzel didn't see his father until the following morning. Denzel and his family lived in a predominantly Black suburban community outside of Corman.

Denzel's father served in the United States Marine Corps (USMC) as an infantryman. A few days prior to shipping out to Vietnam, he married Denzel's mother. After serving two tours (four years) of active duty in Vietnam, he returned to his home state where he worked for a local company until he retired in 2003. Although he did not attend college, Denzel's father earned a certification as a barber and a carpenter upon returning from Vietnam.

Denzel's mother is an African American who retired about two years ago from the Corman Public School District as an administrator. She also served as a classroom

teacher and instructional specialist for twenty-five years. Following the birth of Denzel's sister, she earned an undergraduate degree from Camden State University, an HBCU. She later earned a master's degree from Western State University and a specialist from Eastern University, both PWIs. Denzel was in middle school at the time, and rode along with his mother from Corman to Huntington for her night classes. She would strategically park the car outside of the classroom so she could keep a close eye on Denzel as he did his homework. During the car ride, Denzel and his mother had conversations to keep each other awake. Often on the trip home, Denzel quizzed his mother on the things she learned in class, asking, "Okay ma, tell me everything you learned class!" His mother always shared with him the lessons that she learned.

Denzel and his family went to church on a regular basis. Often Denzel implemented Christian beliefs into his own life, especially in his relationships with others.

I always respected the teacher no matter what! Even if I knew I was right. If the teacher said, "That was that," then you know, I understood. And I didn't give any "back-talk" or that kind of thing. So, I always knew to treat people the way I wanted to be treated and I always believed that whatever you do to others, it would come back on you. So, I always made sure that I respected all my teachers.

Coupled with his respect his teachers, Denzel's fear of his mother encouraged him to stay focused on getting an education.

I was scared of my mom, so I didn't want to get in trouble. I saw my brother mostly get raised because my sister was [much older than] me by that time. But, I would see what [he] went through and the reaction and the consequences and I said, "Mental note! I'm not going to do that because I don't want to get in trouble." . . . Yeah, she would make us pick our switches and I think I've only gotten two or three whoopings in my life. I was not about that life. I was like, "No, this is not what I want for my life. I'm just going to do what I'm supposed to do and I don't want to have to worry about that."

During the same time Denzel was pursuing his undergraduate degree at Dawkins State University in Dolley, his mother was pursuing an online doctoral degree in education from Gila Southeastern University. Coincidentally, they were enrolled in statistics at the same time, creating another opportunity for Denzel to partner up with his mother again to study. But, this time Denzel was the teacher.

So, the funny part was when I was in undergrad, she was working on her doctorate. I remember we were taking statistics together. [This was] when I was at the end of my Biology degree before I started taking a whole bunch of music classes. She would call me and say, "Okay, I don't understand all these equations and what this is." And I'd say, "Okay ma, this is what it is." I would sit and explain—"this is this and this is that." It was funny! She would be like, "I'm too old for this. All this math!" I'm like, "Yeah, Ma."

Denzel credits his mother as being the most influential person in his educational choices. Throughout Denzel's life she has always been a huge inspiration to Denzel and his siblings because of her positive outlook on life and education. According to Denzel, in regards to education, they really didn't have a choice.

She always told us that we all had to go to college. We had to get at least our bachelor's degree. She told us that we didn't have to get our master's, but she was like, "As long as you and I are in this house, you're going to get a bachelor's degree and we are going to make sure that you have everything you need to get it!" . . . I knew from the get-go that I always enjoyed school. I always knew that I wanted to go to school and that I wanted to get as many degrees as I could because I enjoyed going to school. . . . I would go back to school now if I could afford it!

Denzel's mother went to great lengths to ensure that her children received the best education possible. For instance, because of her employment with Corman Public Schools (CPS), she opted for Denzel to attend a middle school considered one of the best in the city. CPS denied Denzel the opportunity to attend this particular school, which already had high enrollment. Denzel's mother was upset. Placing him in the Urban



Diversity Program (UDP), she enrolled Denzel in an all White middle school in a predominantly White suburb outside of Corman. Denzel had to get up really early to catch the bus at 5:45 a.m. for the one hour and fifteen minute ride to school. After getting into UDBP Denzel and his mother decided that he should focus on getting good grades. According to Denzel, there were other perks to going to this school and being in UDP. He was introduced to a wide spectrum of people:

This school got me used to dealing people from different backgrounds because there were Chinese people and there were a whole bunch of White people at the school. But, there weren't that many Black people. I mean, I was around Black people all the time, so that wasn't an issue. I learned how to network with people from different places. I learned a lot of people skills.

Denzel also had the opportunity to travel and perform in France with the school choir. They sang various tunes from *Fiddle On the Roof* and *Willie Wonka*. Due to the long commute to the middle school, his mother insisted that Denzel transition into a high school closer to his home. Denzel began to drive himself to school. He noticed a big difference between the student population at his middle school and high school.

When I got to high school, it was flipped and it was like all Black people. I was like, "Oh my goodness. This is very interesting." Well, it was just different. I realized there are very stark differences between going to schools that are predominantly Black versus schools that are predominantly White.

Denzel had played saxophone in fifth grade, but that interest did not last. However, in high school he returned to the saxophone and joined the school band after realizing that being in band was more interesting than being on the football team. He loved school and all the opportunities that getting an education offered, and he appreciated the strides that his mother took to ensure his educational success.

I saw education as competitive thing. I think subconsciously it was a race. In middle school, because you know often times, I was the only Black person in the

class. And then other kids didn't know any better. They didn't know we were in UDBP. They just knew we were—"Oh, it's a Black kid in class!" It wasn't like, "Oh you're not supposed to zone to be here" or anything like that. But, for us, we all knew each other in the program because we rode the bus to the school. So, in my mind, I'm like, "My mom is going through all of this to get me to go to this school. I have to do well." I worked hard to do what I had to do.

### **Morgan**

Morgan is a 28-year-old African American male who was born in 1985 in Xavier, in a middle-class household. Morgan's parents met during their undergraduate experience. After Morgan's mother became pregnant during her junior year with Morgan she took a temporary leave from school and moved in with her parents in Xavier, Mississippi. Shortly following, she transferred to a public HBCU close to home to complete her undergraduate degree. In addition, she also received a master's degree at Aldridge University in Keileen, which is also a public HBCU. Currently, she is pursuing a doctorate.

To support his future family, Morgan's father dropped out of college during his junior year and enlisted into the United States Marine Corps (USMC) and became a communications officer. Due to his father's service in the Corps, Morgan and his family lived in a number of places including Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, California, and Hawaii. The military experience was tough on Morgan and his younger brother. Every time they made friends with other children, they had to leave because the Corps would assign their father to another duty station.

With the exception of his middle school experience, where he spent a brief moment in a Department of Defense (DoD) School in California, all of Morgan's education was situated in a public school setting. Besides his experience in a DoD school,

Morgan went to Central Middle School in Keileen. Half of his high school experience was spent at Baylor High School in Keileen, and at Lohoka High School in Hawaii. Aside from having some disagreements with some teachers and classmates about being mischievous and liking girls, Morgan thought his middle school and high school experiences were pretty normal. However, during Morgan's eighth grade year he found himself falling in love with music. Instead of just playing music on his trumpet, he also composed it. To Morgan, there was nothing unique about composing as a middle school student. While Morgan did not state that his music teachers were influential in his musical experiences outside of his music classes, data suggest that Morgan's grandfather played an important role in increasing Morgan's knowledge about being a music educator.

In Morgan's family, getting an education was essential. His parents encouraged him to pursue as much education as possible. It was not an option:

You know, going to school and taking academics seriously was something that always permeated in my family, culturally we were raised that way. You know, you work hard. You study hard. You try to get A's and B's and you know, trying to do something. Now, majoring in music was a different subject but you know in regards to going to college.

Not only were his parents well educated, but his grandparents were as well. His grandfather received both his bachelor's and master's degree from an HBCU in a southern state. He also retired as a band director there. Sometimes, Morgan accompanied his grandfather to his band rehearsals and band trips. Although Morgan was not interested in classical music at the time, his grandfather made a tremendous effort to expose him to it. He would have Morgan listen to cassette tapes of various classical recordings. Occasionally, Morgan would object by saying, "I don't want to listen to these dead folks

and their music. This boring stuff! “ Later on in Morgan’s life he would find that the moments he spent with his grandfather became of great use to him as a musician and a music educator.

Despite having spent so many years as a band director, Morgan’s grandfather strongly encouraged Morgan to pursue something other than music because it was a very taxing job. Morgan’s parents also wanted Morgan to consider anything but music to pursue as a career. As Morgan puts it, “My folks weren’t too stoked about me majoring in music.” In the end, Morgan knew exactly what he wanted to do with his life, particularly what he wanted to pursue as a career—music.

### **Johnathan**

Johnathan is a 25-year-old who was born in 1989 in Ellington, nine years after *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California (1978)*, making him the youngest of all the participants in this study. Johnathan and his family have lived in many places including New York, Virginia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, mainly due to his father’s service in the United States Coast Guard (USCG). His family moved every three to four years, depending on his father’s military assignment. Although his father only graduated from high school, he eventually earned what is equivalent to an associate’s degree in the civilian sector.

Johnathan’s mother earned an associate’s degree from Mosley State Community College in Cox a southern state. Johnathan’s sister is currently an undergraduate student at Huntington University pursuing a degree in criminal justice.

Of all the communities that Johnathan and his family lived in, Johnathan was able to clearly recall his experience in Ivanville, largely because he and his family lived there

the longest. Initially, they moved in with his grandmother in an urban community for an extent of time. Despite the fact that this community was not the safest, Johnathan was able to make friends and play outside. Eventually, his parents found a home in a suburban community in West Ivanville. This community was composed of only retirees, two African American families, and no children except Johnathan. Anytime Johnathan wanted to hang out with his friends, they had to drive or ride their bicycles at least five miles over from his old neighborhood. Besides going to school, church, and on trips with his family, Johnathan remained at home.

Johnathan's parents did not receive a post-secondary degree, but they wanted their children to receive at the very least a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution. Johnathan explains, "I guess to me, it was always—you had to go to college. It was never a question." However, early on, Johnathan encountered some unfortunate school experiences while living in South Florida. At the time, Johnathan did not understand why he was treated differently and also placed in special education. Due to the fact that he was not able uncover a rationale as to why he was treated differently by his teacher, he assumed that he was not smart.

Honestly, I look back now—I had a third grade teacher who used to call me stupid. She thought I was just stupid, you know. She just thought that I was just dumb. She never thought I would amount to anything. She was a teacher that I just would want to meet today and be like, "This is who I am!" You know, she was just not a nice teacher. I guess she didn't expect stuff from me as a person, you know.

Oh, I remember there was another student, he was also Black . . . I don't want to say that she only does this to Black kids, but I can only remember it happening to Black students because I was Black. So, it was only like three of us in the class. It's not like it was a whole bunch of us. So, he was writing his name down and she basically told him that he was writing his name wrong. I can't remember how he pronounced his name, but everyone always said it differently. But, she was telling

him that he was spelling his name wrong. I was like, "No!" And he wasn't spelling his name wrong. She just didn't agree with how his name was pronounced. And so she was—it was kind of messed up. It was funny because she was an English teacher.

After Johnathan and his family moved to Ivanville, all of a sudden he was no longer in special education. He was placed into regular classes where he found himself as the smartest kid in the class. He also found out that he was further along than many of his peers. Later, he was able to put this experience in perspective:

Currently, I'm reading this book called *The Miseducation of the Negro* [by Carter Woodson]. He speaks on African Americans and special education. They never knew why. They never understood, you know. They were just there.

In middle school in Ivanville, Johnathan got in quite a few fights at school.

Johnathan was very small—standing at 4'1'' until his tenth grade year of high school.

I was really small, so people would pick on me. I didn't deal well with that well. If you tried to steal my lunch money, I would be like, "No, we are going to fight before you steal my lunch money!" That's who I was, you know, and I've gotten in many of fights. I lost a few, but I still had my lunch money—at the very least I still had my pride. I've always been small.

Johnathan had started band in sixth grade, playing the saxophone because many of his peers chose to play the sax. Initially, he wanted to play the drums. Following Johnathan's enrollment in the school band program, he found himself among a community of people who cared less about his size and only about what he could contribute to band.

I could go there and not feel threatened. I didn't have to defend myself and people weren't trying to pick on me. Because I was literally the best musician in that room. I was the guy that everybody asked, "How do you play this note?" I was the guy who they wanted to play a song. I was the only one who could play by ear because I had to do it everyday [with my dad]. It was one song they wanted me to play everyday [*humming "Ruff Rider's Anthem" by DMX*]. So, in that class I was like the coolest guy ever because I was able to figure everything out. That kind of turned everything around because I didn't have to defend myself in that class.

Although Johnathan's mother participated in school band, it was Johnathan's father who assumed a more active role in ensuring that Johnathan was practicing at home.

My dad, he kind of pushed me once he found out I actually liked band. I guess one childhood memories would be one of the skills that would take me a long way was my dad challenging me when I first started. I didn't know that it was transcribing as a child, but he would put Grover Washington on the radio and then tell have me to play it. And it took me probably about a year or so and eventually I was able to play Grover's solo by the 7th or 8th grade.

Like many of the participants in this study, regular attendance in church was essential. Johnathan played his instrument in church on Sunday mornings. He really enjoyed playing at church mostly because many people in the church were very supportive. Identical to Chris, Johnathan attended Falgout High School after middle school. They knew each other, but weren't close friends. Johnathan was very active in the band program through his participation in the marching, concert, and jazz bands. When asked about his participation in other organizations and clubs in high school, he responded by stating, "It was all band. That's it. I was in band. I went home and thought about band. That was all I cared about!" He was also an All-State player and a very successful jazz saxophonist, which can be attributed to his father's insistence on him practicing everyday and listening to jazz recordings.

In the high school band, Johnathan aspired to become a student leader but was denied that opportunity.

A negative thing that happened to me, it allowed me to see how whole the world works. Up until that point, everything I did that I tried at, I got. Whenever I worked hard, it came about. And you have these fantasies—"if you work hard, you're going to get it." I did everything you were supposed to do to get section leader. And I guess that's when I was introduced to politics. What happened was the band director picked [another student] to be the section leader for the sax section to prepare him to be drum major for the following year. And the band

director told me this, “He needs to learn to be a leader of a group.” That was his legitimate answer as to why he got section leader. And he didn't tell me this until after he realized that nobody was listening to the guy. I guess that was a negative experience when I realized how the world really works, you know. Sometimes, it backfires. That's an experience that made me mature more.

Despite not being selected as a student leader, that disappointment caused Johnathan to work hard.

It was like everything that I felt that thought I should have gotten, I didn't get until All-State. I guess that's why All-State is a lot bigger and I guess I also learned to develop my work ethic in high school. Preparing for All-State and practicing everyday to try to beat the guy who I was never beating, you know. Maybe that made me develop my drive towards what I wanted to do.

For Johnathan, the people who influenced his choices in education the most were his father, his middle school and high school band directors, and “a White guy” named Bill Johnson. Johnathan met Bill in the local music store where Bill worked. At the time, Bill was a Staff Sergeant in the state National Guard Band where he played the tenor saxophone. Bill was an exceptional saxophonist, so much so that Johnathan’s father drove Johnathan to the band audition. Johnathan made the band and joined during December of his senior year and is currently serving in another state.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PORTRAITS II**

This chapter presents portraits offering brief descriptions of each participant's lived experiences during their undergraduate experience at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) as well at their graduate experience at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI).

#### **HBCU Experiences**

##### **Karl's Undergraduate Experience**

Karl chose Binder University (BU) to continue studying with his percussion teacher from Cowell Youth Orchestra Program (CYOP), who accepted a professorship there. Also, in choosing to attend Binder University education, Karl chose to attend Binder University. Although Karl received an academic scholarship to attend BU, his education was free because his mother was a professor in the drama department there.

Karl's parents were very excited that Karl would attend BU. His parents were very supportive, but were not able to attend many of his performances due to scheduling conflicts. However, his father managed to film Karl playing the snare drum at a football game using his Super 8mm film camera, a camera that only recorded video and no audio. Later, his parents attended his senior recital.

Unlike all of the other participants of this study, Karl's first day on campus was not his first of band camp or the first day of classes; he was well-acquainted from his frequent campus trips during high school to participate in various music and theater groups. Some students actually believed Karl to be an upperclassman because he spent so much time on campus for rehearsals and performances. However, Karl's first day on

campus as a college freshman was attending the president's picnic for incoming freshmen a few days prior to classes beginning. Following the picnic, he went to the freshmen orientation pool party where they were playing Kurtis Blow's 1980 hip-hop single, "These are the Breaks." Shortly following the party, Karl fell asleep while driving home and crashed into a phone pole, resulting in the wiring of his jaws for a minimum of two weeks. He informed his aural skills professor of his situation, but his professor still required him to participate, saying "If you can hum, you can sing!" Throughout his tenure at BU, Karl did really well in all of his classes largely due to his Catholic high school education. Karl shares:

I've always been decent in school. I've never been a straight 'A' student, but I've always been diligent in school. I think all through high school my GPA was a 3.3. Because of my SAT test scores, I didn't have to take math or science [in college]. So, I started right away taking music classes. And even though I started classes late because of my wired jaw, I felt fine in other classes like theory because my high school band director was great. Even in high school we analyzed music. School was not difficult for me. I had to work for some things, but I wasn't that person who was struggling.

Karl did not participate in the marching band until his sophomore year. Students in the marching band at Binder considered participating in band as another activity they participated in. As Karl puts it, "We were just in the band." Karl also was a member of Kappa Kappa Psi (KKPsi), an honorary marching band fraternity, and Phi Mu Alpha (PMA) Sinfonia, a professional music fraternity for men. According to Karl, in the 1980s young people at Binder didn't go to clubs to have a good time, they went to house parties as well as the skating rinks to show off their newest dance moves on their skates in the rink.

First-year band members had “the option” of participating in what BU students referred to as “crawling.” Crawling was based on an ideal of “crawling before walking.” Although the university prohibited the process, it continued through concealed activities ranging from older members requiring freshmen to do pushups to some people giving and receiving “wood,” where an individual receives a paddling from another individual with a wooden object. Other activities included some band members throwing mixtures of hot water, oatmeal, and peanut butter into girls’ hair. The crawling process, although not mandatory, was something that freshmen were strongly encouraged to consider by the upperclassmen. Karl states:

Mandatory meant that if you don't do it, you're not going to get any respect. So, yes it was mandatory, but not from the directors. But, if you wanted to have a decent social life and not be ostracized, you just dealt with it. Now, my whole philosophy on that has changed since then. However, the culture changes severely the further south you go, over time, and conference wise. But, I think it's because of society. Southern society is overall less educated because the people that lived in the south had the mental wherewith all and the motivation to migrate north. So what you have in the north are people that were like, "I'm going to go do this. I'm going to get an education." In the south, people are like, "Hey, this is where I am." I know I'm generalizing it, that's kind of the vibe. Down here in the south [where I live now], you really can't vary from traditions that much.

Binder was a predominantly Black institution of higher education. Although international students attending Binder were African, Karl believes they were mainly recruited for sports. White students also played sports, but many of them played a sport (e.g., baseball, track and field, golf, tennis) that Whites were often seen playing in professional sports. However, in the early 1980s, a White student on the campus of Binder University was “an extreme rarity.” The faculty population was also predominantly Black. White professors at Binder made up about 30% of the total faculty population.

Karl was very close with his percussion professor, sometimes having dinner with him and engaging in casual and personal conversations. Karl's professor believed in the benefits that gigging offered—a hands-on-experience—and they often performed in town together with other BU jazz professors. Despite the fact that Karl and his professors shared these experiences, Karl never allowed himself to cross the line in class by acting as though he and his professor were buddies. Recognizing that Karl was not only talented but also mature, the professor encouraged Karl to apply to attend Hollas, his alma mater, for his graduate experience.

Immediately following graduation, Karl married his girlfriend who also attended Binder. He also worked as bicycle courier in town prior to starting graduate classes the following year.

### **Michael's Undergraduate Experience**

There were several factors that influenced Michael's choice to attend Kingfield A&M University (KAMU). Michael's interest in the marching band style of HBCUs marching bands sparked after seeing the then Grambling State University Marching Band in a 1980s march in a Coke commercial on TV. He was fascinated by not only their dance moves and the music they played, but also the fact that they could do both, simultaneously. Mr. Cannon, a Black assistant principal, found out that Michael was thinking about attending Grambling and suggested that he consider KAMU, only forty minutes away from his hometown.

Michael's first experience on campus was freshmen band camp. His parents helped him get things situated in his dorm, and then they drove back to Balke, a small town in the southwest. Michael found a moment to himself: "I was the first one in the

room. So, I sat on the bed and I was like, ‘Man, I'm really in college!’ That was a big moment for me.” Michael was really excited to be amongst so many people. He even became best friends with two other males with whom he shared a room with during his first semester of college.

Band camp began with a surprise for Michael. At this particular time, the marching band did not have a permanent place to practice. So, every year the freshmen had to transport dirt from another location on campus, using the trucks of some of the upperclassmen, to lay the foundation of what would become their practice field, a very tedious process. Michael explains:

The band directors would say, "Well, we have to get the field ready." So, we were thinking that we just had to put the yard lines down and put the sidelines down. No! He was like, "We have to make a practice field." They had a ton of shovels. So, we're like, "Man, what are we doing with these?" So, they took us to these piles of dirt and we had to shovel the dirt into the back of the trucks and then take the trucks to the field and then shovel the dirt off the truck as they drove across the field to fill in holes. We did that from about 8am until that evening—for the entire day. When it was no longer day, we used the truck lights to see. The next day we had to go out and mark the field off. We literally had to make a practice field!

Band camp was very memorable for Michael. Everyone had to dress alike by wearing white t-shirts and dark colored shorts. Everything that the section leaders and drum majors told the freshmen to do, they had to do. Freshmen in the band didn't have a name *per say*. They were all referred to as “Crabs.” Although many people would consider the idea that freshmen were referred to as Crabs as hazing, Michael didn't see it that way. His perspective was “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.”

Michael recalls one person in particular quite vividly, nicknamed “Bam-Bam.” He was what they referred to as an “old head,” meaning that he was an upperclassman. With his 6’2” frame, he was also very muscular and intimidating.

So, one day during the second week this guy just threw the door open and said, "Crabs! Stand up. Get up off your feet!" He was just screaming and acting crazy. He was the most muscular dude I had ever seen in my life. He was huge! Then the old heads were like, "That's Bam-Bam!" And all of us had to stand up and he walked around asking us, "What's your name?" Some of the freshmen forgot that when the old heads ask you your name, you don't say your name is John Smith. You say, "I'm Crab Number 2." He would yell, "No it isn't. It's Crab." Then he would grab them by the shirt and they would be like, "Okay. Okay. It's Crab! It's Crab!" So, by the time he got to me, I already knew—“I'm Crab Number Four.” [*Laughing*]. It was memorable.

From the first day of band camp to the game where KAMU played Grambling University in football, the freshmen went through the crabbing process. On that particular day, following lunch the freshmen went through a ritual that transcended them from “a crab” to an official member of the marching band. Michael shares the experience:

We had a game where had to get your "SWAC hours," because we were a part of the Southwestern Athletic Conference and it was the Grambling game. We went to restaurant called Luby's. I remember we ate last and all the old head guys got up while we were still eating. We were like, "Where are they going?" We didn't have a clue as to what they were getting ready to do. So, we got up and I remember walking with my tray and the charter buses were parked and you had to walk between the charter buses to get to the entrance of the bus. I remember turning a corner [while walking to the buses] and next then I knew, I was off my feet and all of the old heads were in between the buses. They literally picked you up and passed you in the air, like you were crowd surfing. You took a couple of blows to the body, but they were like little love taps. It wasn't like a gang fight or anything. Then they would put you down on the ground by the entrance of the bus and then the drum majors would tell you that you have your SWAC hours, you're not a crab anymore. It was like a rite of passage.

Michael’s parents were very supportive of him and his aspirations of becoming a music educator. His mother did not attend many of the Michael’s performances because she worked a very busy schedule taking care of his younger brothers as well as attending

to a full-time job. However, she along with the rest of Michael's family attended the only parade the KAMU band marched in Michael's hometown. Although Balke was a predominantly White community that strongly supported Phillips A&M University, a PWI, they really enjoyed the KAMU marching band. Michael shares:

That was one of the few times my mom got to see me perform. The family was at the parade and they were all going crazy. The reason being was that there was a band full of about 200 African American students marching down the street. We were right behind Phillips A&M University's (PAMU) band and everybody were like, "Oh, here come the PAMU Marching Panther Band!" [*Articulating PAMU fight song*] Then we came behind them playing the latest R&B classics. The crowd said, "Forget PAMU, this band is rocking!" [*Laughing*].

Despite Michael's family not being able to attend all of performances, over long weekends and holidays when he was able to go home to Balke, he would share his experiences sitting with them on the front porch.

Overall, Michael enjoyed his classes, so much so that he never missed a class, even when he didn't feel well. On the other hand, his roommates were not as diligent about attending class. Michael often found himself telling them, as if it was a broken record, "Dude, you got to go to class, man! You're paying for this!" Michael was on a mission—to get an education—not just so he would be able to get a good job, but to help take care of his family as well. While Michael found his professors to be helpful and quite knowledgeable of their specialties, he didn't identify any of them as having been a mentor to him.

According to Michael, the student population was comprised of approximately 97% African Americans with 3% being White and international students. Michael appreciated the 6:1 ratio of females to males. Within the marching band, all the students were African American. However, some White students joined predominantly Black

organizations, such as Alpha Phi Alpha and Kappa Alpha Psi. Michael was both interested and inspired to see these individuals choosing not to avoid interacting with the Black students.

There were many social events on campus, sponsored by the university as well as students and their organizations. There was never a dull moment because there was something going on. Michael was very selective of the events he attended because he didn't want to jeopardize his academic priorities to hangout with friends or attend parties. However, of the events Michael attended he always felt welcomed because everyone respected band members and in some way envied them. Following Thursday night band rehearsals, some of the band members and many of the other students on campus would gather at the student union to watch two particular TV shows, *A Different World* and *The Cosby Show*. Michael shares:

But, the social environment, it was so much fun. You couldn't be bored because the band was like a family and we always stuck together. Whenever we wanted to do something, we always went together. That "family picture" was there. It was like, "These are my brothers and sisters." If there weren't parties after band rehearsal, we always would get out and talk a bit and eat and sit together in our section. Everybody stuck together. If you were in the band you were never alone and couldn't say, "Man, I'm just so lonely." If you said that, there was something wrong with you.

Michael eventually became the section leader for the clarinet section and president of the symphonic band. It was customary for leaders to also join one of the Greek music organizations. Other students approached him multiple times to recruit him into Kappa Kappa Psi (KKPsi). Initially, Michael was quite skeptical about joining KKPsi due to the fact that they practiced strategies he didn't agree with in the pledging process. Michael shares:



There was this guy named Ed Scott and he was one of the main leaders in the band. He would always come to me saying, "Michael, man, we got to have you in the fraternity. You're the sectional leader and you're not in the fraternity. You're the president of the symphonic band. Do you know if you get you in the fraternity of how many people will follow you because you are in there? We could have the whole band in there." I said, "Joe, I understand, but you guys can't beat us like we're slaves to get into the organization! You have got to do something different." He was like, "Okay, if you pledge this time, I can guarantee you that I'll be the dean of pledges and it won't be excessive. You will still have to go through something though." I was like, "Well, okay. I can understand going through something, but that other stuff—that is ridiculous. You want to do this to me and then call me your brother afterwards. That's crazy!"

After dropping line<sup>8</sup> half way through the first two times, Michael finally made it through the pledging process for KKPsi the third time, earning him the line name “Da Capo,” meaning “back to the beginning.”

Although Michael had a full scholarship that covered room and board, fees and tuition, he had a few jobs to help with the expenses of living of campus after he moved out of his dorm for his senior year. He worked part-time at Burger King in McClain, but not for long. Michael found another part-time job working at the Community Center of Music in McClain, working with a local chamber orchestra. While there, Michael taught private lessons to young woodwind players and he performed with the chamber orchestra and toured with them throughout the state.

There were two very conservative communities surrounding KAMU, who at times were also racist. Although the distance between the university and surrounding areas were only five miles away, students opted to drive approximately forty miles to McClain where they could purchase groceries and other items they needed. Michael was

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<sup>8</sup> The process by which an perspective member elects to relinquish their efforts to becoming a member of a Greek organization.

not able to recall anything happening out of the ordinary, but he always felt that those communities did not approve of him and his classmates. Michael shares:

Sometimes, you had to be careful when you would go into those towns to buy groceries or get things that you may need on campus. It's a rural area that's predominantly Caucasians. I'll just say it! It was full of Rednecks. It was kind of like you had to be careful. You could tell that you weren't welcomed there because you went to that university. They thought that you were one of them "upitty." [*Imitating the locals' native accent*]. They would say, "There goes one of those upitty coloreds because they go to that Black university over there!" I never let that part bother me because growing up in Balke, we encountered that sometimes. The Caucasians did not like us because of our skin color and I still think it's so stupid. But, other than that, we didn't do a lot of things in those communities.

During Michael's junior year at KAMU, the McDowell Independent School District (MISD) hired him. Upon graduating from KAMU with honors, Michael immediately began teaching middle school band in in McDowell, in 1990. After a year, he transferred to one of the high schools that the middle school band program feed into. In 1994, Michael moved to McClain where he taught high school and middle school band until 2009—the same year he began his master's degree.

### **Nathan's Undergraduate Experience**

Nathan chose to attend PAMU because of the band program and the offerings of the school of music. According to Nathan, in comparison with other HBCU music programs, the percentage of Black PAMU graduates was higher at the time. During Nathan's tenure at PAMU, the only non-African American professor he had was a White history professor. The rest of his professors were all African American, while the student population was 99% African American

Nathan's parents always advocated to Nathan of the importance of getting an education. They also received their undergraduate degrees from an HBCU, and were very

happy to know that Nathan would be going PAMU, especially his father because he thought that PAMU had a better band program than that of his alma mater, DSU. Particularly, his parents loved driving down to PAMU to see their son play and participate in the football atmosphere, specifically homecomings. Nathan also received a full scholarship to attend.

Nathan vaguely recalls his first day of classes. However, he was able to recall specific experiences regarding band camp.

I remember when I went to band camp, it started in August, and we called it “Pre-Drill.” It was two weeks before classes started. I remember we came down and my family is big football fans and we had tickets [to a professional football game] that Sunday. So, they dropped me off a day early so they could go to the game. [*Laughing hysterically*]. My mom even got the housing people to let me in a day early. So, that's how I got dropped off to band camp and it started that Monday—and classes, I guess, started two weeks after that.

Nathan’s experiences in the marching band were filled with long hours of rehearsals where they were expected to memorize all of their music, even music they played in the stands at football games. Although the experience was pretty intense, especially for freshmen, Nathan thought it was a great learning experience in regards to managing adversity and improving character. Overall, he stated that the experience made him a stronger person.

According to Nathan, many HBCU’s music professors lack a terminal degree, specifically within their band departments. However, this fact was not true to the PAMU School of Music, where many of Nathan’s professors possessed terminal degrees from institutions like Ohio State University, the University of Michigan, and Florida State University. They were very knowledgeable, helpful, encouraging, and personally invested in their students, particularly the band directors, Drs. Leo and McKay.

Nathan really enjoyed the campus environment, but only when he could participate. Particularly in the fall, the marching band was very busy traveling to all of the football games as well as making appearances, nationally and internationally. Not until the spring semester were band students able to really participate in social events on campus, such as those sponsored by the university or by student organizations like fraternities and sororities.

Nathan joined three fraternal organizations: Kappa Kappa Psi, Alpha Phi Alpha, and the Masonic Lodge. Through his membership of these organizations he was able to meet young men who would not only become his fraternity brothers, but his best friends. Nathan was also a student representative in the Student Government Association (SGA) where he served as liaison between the SGA and the marching band. While in the marching band, he held various leadership positions including serving as the saxophone section leader, president and vice-president of Kappa Kappa Psi. He also served as the district vice-president of Kappa Kappa Psi. Through his involvement in various student organizations, including those that were Greek, he and other members engaged in community service projects such as tutoring young students at the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Club.

Upon completion of his undergraduate degree in music education, Nathan returned to Cormon to work as a band director in a predominantly Black high school for nine years.

### **Darren's Undergraduate Experience**

Like Michael, Darren also pursued an undergraduate music education degree at Kingfield A&M University (KAMU). Although Darren applied and was accepted to more

than one university in in his state, including the University of Middle State and the state university of at Cline, he chose KAMU. His choice was largely based on his interests in the university's marching band, particularly its drum line. Following the KAMU band's performance at the State Fair in Burch during his senior year in high school, Darren was hooked. Similar to many traditional HBCU marching bands, Kingfield's marching style is a show style accompanied by exciting choreographed dance moves, high-stepping, and current popular music one would hear on the radio. According to Darren, he just wanted to "chill" and "jam." According to Darren, "their band was on it!" In simpler terms, "they were doing the thing!"

Darren was the first male within his entire family to attend college. Despite having limited information regarding applying to and attending college, one his cousins who already earned an undergraduate degree was helpful in providing Darren with some information. Darren was awarded a scholarship to attend KAMU, which was retracted when the school learned that Darren wanted to pursue music instead of business. Despite not having a scholarship, Darren used work-study, grants and loans, and gigs to pursue his degree. He also created a personal fund consisting of a small jar labeled "Get 'D' Back to College Fund." During breaks away from school, Darren would go to various relatives and friends with this jar in hand asking for money to contribute to food, gas, and other necessities.

Darren's family was not able to attend every performance, but they made sure that he knew he had their support and consideration. For instance, every September his family drove 35 miles to Burch to see Darren perform with the KAMU marching band at the State Fair. Even Darren's uncle arranged his marriage to take place during the same

weekend, creating the opportunity to also support Darren and surround that particular weekend with family involvement. For Darren's uncle and his wife, they would celebrate their wedding anniversary the same weekend of the State Fair for years to come. Many of Darren's family members instinctively knew that he would make it. Remembering his late great aunt, Darren states, "She told me that out of all her sons and her grand kids, she worried about them, but she didn't have to worry about me."

Darren had a very close relationship with his mother. He saw her not only as a great source of moral support, but a source of inspiration. From relocating her family to another neighborhood to providing Darren the opportunity to receive private lessons, as a single mother with limited resources, she made sure that her sons were cared for. Darren made a vow to his mother that he was not going to mess up his opportunity to receive a college education as well as not disappoint her. In return for his mother's continuous support, instead of exchanging typical Christmas gifts with his mother, Darren shared his grades with his mother. Never was there a time where Darren's GPA was lower than a 3.3 while at KAMU.

Although KAMU's student population is predominantly Black, during Darren's time there, there was a robust representation of students who were Hispanic. Other students attending were also Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and White. In addition, majority of the faculty there were also Black. Darren could only recall five White professors.

Darren was very excited about going to college. Despite the nervousness he and the other freshmen shared, Darren was eager to soak up all that KAMU had to offer. Remembering his first day of classes, Darren states:

I can just remember getting a syllabus and I was like, "What is this?" There were no bells ringing. It was just odd being on my own. It really felt like I made it! I am far away, but I made it! I got my backpack and I'm going to class. It felt really good, but then came band practice that evening and it got really bad. [*Laughing*].

Similar to thousands of other college band students, Darren's first day on campus was also his first day of freshman band camp. Darren recalls:

I definitely remember my first day on campus for band camp. . . . For band camp, we had to wear white shirts and they told us to be back at like 5pm. We had orientation and we got out at about 8pm and they told us that band practice started around 5. We were like, "Five o'clock pm?" And they were like, "No, a.m.!" I was like, "What?" So, be here in white shirts at 5am. That was very interesting.

All freshmen on the KAMU drumline had to shave their heads completely bald. Unfortunately for Darren, he was the only freshman on the snareline at the time.

Although it was a tremendous honor to be the only freshman on the snareline, it was also a very nerveing and burdensome experience. Darren states, "I looked to the left and the right on the snareline and just to be honest, I was thinking, 'Everybody here is going to whip my ass!' You know, 'Everybody is out to get me!'"

Due to the fact that Darren's playing ability was not on the same level as the upperclassmen on the snareline, he had to spend additional time honing his skills after band practice. For the KAMU marching band, practice started at 4:30pm and typically ended around 11pm; however, the drumline continued their rehearsal time until 1am. While many of the marching band students were either headed to their homes or dorm rooms, Darren spent additional time at a student leader's apartment practicing until 2am. According to Darren, these measures were employed to ensure his success in the next rehearsal so he would not keep everyone else behind. Darren states:

In regards to band, I don't know how to say it. I wouldn't wish that on anybody else, but I'm kind of glad that I went through it. It matured me beyond my years. It

really put it into my mind the idea of hard work. Like, don't make excuses. Just make it happen--perfection for performance. The things that I learned my freshman year of being in the band landed me the position that I have now.

Darren's professors were very encouraging, especially to those students who were serious about music. Many of Darren's professors encouraged him to seek musical experience outside of KAMU. They didn't want him to continue to be "a big fish in a small pond." Dr. Walker, a Black professor of piano and music history, was one of Darren's favorite professors because she was strict and challenged her students to learn. According to Darren, "she didn't play!" He recalls a moment in her class:

I will never forget when she went off in the class one day. Everyone pretty much showed up late, but I was on time. No one knew anything and then a dude walked in that lived around the corner from the school. She made the following statement, "What am I here for? You all are really wasting my time! I can really go home! I mean can anybody have a conversation with me about music? What do you know? You all are coming in here wasting time and it's really pissing me off! If you're not going to be serious about this, I won't have to waste my time and you definitely won't have to waste yours." I was like, "Man, she's going off and it seemed as though she was definitely talking to me." Although I had one of the highest grades in the class, I felt bad.

Darren met many of his friends in band as well as the fraternities he pledged, both Phi Mu Alpha, an international music fraternity for men and Phi Beta Sigma, Inc., a predominantly Black social fraternity for men. Darren and his fraternity brothers were actively involved on their campus as well as surrounding communities, volunteering to perform at churches, cleaning up local church parking lots, and adopting highways. Pledging both organizations were challenging, but Darren was determined to remain focused, academically and musically. One of the most influential experiences of pledging Phi Beta Sigma for Darren was learning a poem titled *Excuses*. Darren recites:



“Excuses are the tools of the weak and incompetent, used to build monuments of nothingness. Those who specialize in excuses are seldom capable of doing anything else. Therefore, I will not give excuses.”

No matter what fraternity or band meetings and rehearsals Darren was required to attend or the amount of parties he attended, he found the time to practice and study or, in his words, “Make it happen!”

Due to the fact that KAMU was located in a rural area, students had to shop at local stores and restaurants in the area that were predominantly White, all of which were not welcoming to the students at KAMU. For instance, despite the fact that students at KAMU provided significant revenue for businesses in the area, they were denied their right to vote on campus. Instead of accepting such denial, Darren and his classmates organized themselves to challenge community members by marching to the town hall in hopes of urging officials to overturn the decision. Later, Darren and his classmates were able to get polling machines on their campus. Their efforts were so effective that their story was shared through various media outlets in the state.

### **Chris’ Undergraduate Experience**

Chris chose to pursue a degree in music education at Elliot State University (ESU) largely because he was interested in the marching band and its energetic marching style. He also chose this institution because of its close proximity to his hometown and place some distance between him and his father. In addition, ESU offered him an experience of being part of a majority African American student and faculty population.

Chris’ parents were happy that Chris was going to college. To ensure that he would be able to complete his degree, Chris relied on financial aid, military pay and benefits, and working during the spring semester to take care of all of his expenses. In the

summer following high school graduation, Chris endured the challenges of Basic Combat Training (BCT) in the US Army in Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Chris' first day on campus was his first day of band camp, referred to as "Pre-Drill." Similar to the culture of BCT, band students were required to run multiple miles, endure the yelling of the leaders of the band, and march across campus singing cadences. Unlike many freshmen arriving to "Pre-Drill," Chris was in great shape and used to the military's rigorous regimen that included getting up extremely early in the morning and engaging in strenuous activities. For Chris, Pre-Drill was "a piece of cake."

Instead of being called by their names, freshmen band students were referred to as "Crabs." According to Chris, Crab is an acronym that stands for Currently Recruited Active Bandsmen; however, the glamorized definition of the name could not lessen the significant psychological effects it had on the freshmen. Being a Crab meant being considered to be the lowest of the low and having to prove yourself in order to gain full membership in the ESU Marching Band. Chris described it as two and a half weeks of "pure hell," lasting from 4:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.

You had to work your way up through the organization before you gained respect and had certain privileges. You know with freshmen, they couldn't do certain things. You couldn't go out during your first semester. You couldn't go out to parties. You couldn't even walk on the grass on the band field. You had to run everywhere on the band field.

Despite some of the difficulties of being a freshman in the band, Chris found within it a family away from his home and family in Ivanville. The band staff as well as the upperclassmen in the band was very supportive and dependable:

I don't know how the experience is at a PWI, but the experience at an HBCU was like that of a family. We had people coming from clear across the country to go to school there and they didn't have family there. So, their immediate family became

the people in band. But, the older people in the band, they took on almost a motherly or fatherly type role. Of course, they were only a couple of years older than us, but if you needed a place to lay your head for a night or so, you could always depend on calling them. Even today, I can still call people who were in the band with me—as if we never skipped a beat. If I need help, they were there.

According to Chris, being in the marching band at an HBCU was like being a jock on campus. The more prominent a student's position was in the band, the higher their social status on campus. For instance, Chris eventually acquired the highest position, head drum major. Almost instantaneously Chris went from eating lunch with his college buddies to eating lunch with the president of the university and other important administrative figures.

Chris was not a member of any other organization on campus. While he considered pledging a fraternity, Chris decided not to, particularly because many students sort of disappeared from college life for almost an entire semester to pledge, resulting in their GPA falling to “a point of no return.” In his eyes, being in the band was like being in a fraternity. Instead of walking around the yard with Greek letters on your chest, band students wore their band shirts. Chris states, “Being in the band at an HBCU carries a lot of weight.”

According to Chris, much of the undergraduate music curriculum at ESU was quite similar to those at PWIs. Students took core music classes as well as performance, music education and general music education classes. Chris enjoyed going to class, largely because the professors were very positive and accessible to discuss and assist students in solving issues both inside and out of the classroom. Most of all, professors genuinely cared about students and their success.

Most of our professors exchanged phone numbers with us. So, if you weren't in class they would call you. You weren't but a phone call away from them finding where you were. At a large school there are more people in your classroom as opposed to 15 to 20 people in your classroom. So, if you're not there, they know you're not there! In that aspect, you would get reprimanded immediately if you weren't in class. [*Imitating the professor*] "Oh, where were you on this day? I know you should have been here! You don't have anything to do!"

Although they were concerned about students, professors were also extremely tough. They demanded excellence. Some, on the other hand, were brutal. Chris states:

I had this theory teacher, Ms. Harris. This lady could hear a rat piss on cotton and tell you what key it was in! She flunked everybody on their very first theory test. Nobody passed. I flunked my very first theory test with a -17. I had never seen so many red marks on a piece of paper in my life! It literally broke my spirits!

Chris attributes some of his success to a few of his professors who served as mentors, guiding him through college towards graduating. Even today, these professors are still guiding him through the process of completing his master's degree. Whether he is need of help of writing a paper or acquiring information regarding general music education inquiries, his undergraduate mentors are glad to help. He particularly credits his euphonium professor, Dr. Holley, for his success on the euphonium and as a musician in a predominantly White music field—teaching. To see a very successful and highly respected African American male in music inspired Chris to continue his learning and his search for understanding in performance and as an African American in music education.

During Chris' junior year of his undergraduate experience, he had his first son. Following his completion of his undergraduate music education degree, Chris started teaching in an inner city high school in Mixon, and was married to his wife, Karren. Currently, he serves as director of bands in an inner city high school in the south. Shortly

following, he witnessed the birth of his only daughter, Jennifer followed by the birth of his second son, Joey.

### **Denzel's Undergraduate Experience**

Denzel applied to three institutions for graduate school: Dawkins State University (DSU), a public HBCU; the University of Georgia, a public PWI; and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a private HBCU located in Wesley, Virginia. Denzel chose to attend DSU because it offered him the most money. Additional factors that contributed to Denzel's decision were that DSU offered an undergraduate degree in biology and he would have the opportunity to participate in the marching band. Due to some financial assistance from his parents combined with academic and music scholarships, Denzel was able to go to DSU for free.

In Denzel's home, getting an education was very important, and his parents were very excited to know that he was going to college. However, Denzel's mother was not too excited to visit him at school, because she was terrified of driving through the southern mountains of the state to get to DSU from Corman.

Based on Denzel's band director's letter of recommendation, he was accepted to the marching band and offered a large scholarship, covering all of his tuition and fees, without an audition. This required that he attend freshmen band camp. One of the benefits of going to band camp was that students could move into their dorm rooms first and not stand in the long lines to acquire books and other essential items.

Well, we moved into our rooms first and the parent meeting was last. So, they just addressed the parents and they told us we had to be up promptly at 5am and our section leaders would come and get us from our dorms and stuff. I was like, "5am, what the heck did I just sign up for!" The hardest part was when my parents left. They left and I sitting in my dorm room and I was like, "They're not here!" It was

terrible. I was so sad that first night and then I woke and we were running around the campus at five in the morning and I was like, "Uh-uh!"

Within a day, Denzel called home following his parent's departure from the campus for them to return to pick him up. His mother refused, stating, "Ah, no! You wanted to go there and you are going to stay there!" Denzel's first few days of camp were lonely because he didn't know anyone. Eventually, he met many other band students who later became some of his best friends. They were also the very people who helped him make it through band camp. Each day from 4:30 p.a. to roughly 2 a.m. in the morning, Denzel and his band mates were practicing—with breaks in between for meals.

The experiences of freshmen in the DSU band varied greatly from those of the upperclassmen. Talent and skill was not sufficient for freshmen.

Basically, as a freshmen you don't get respect, you ate last, and you're pretty much last in everything. It's an interesting dynamic. I don't actually know if PWIs do the same thing. I know they have different processes and stuff, but not on the same level as HBCUs—like you don't have a voice. You're trying to earn your way in the band. You're basically there to learn how things are done. You don't become an upperclassmen or an "old head" until you march at the homecoming game during your sophomore year. But, the older I got and the more mature I became, I realized that it was really stupid.

Individuals were encouraged to "pledge" their sections. Historically part of the band's culture, though not mandatory, pledging meant spending additional time following rehearsals at a student leader's apartment memorizing music, reciting information, and sometimes, engaging in hazing activities. Denzel started the process of pledging, but did not continue because he didn't feel comfortable allowing others to mistreat him verbally and physically.

Oh, they would have us do stupid crap. I know they've paddled people. But, after I got there and realized that I played better than some of the people there, I was like, "If I'm going to do stupid stuff, you have to play better than me." I'm not

going to do stupid stuff and I'm a better player than you. . . . It was too much stress and I had to keep my grades up. We all started out on line for the saxophone section, but I dropped in the middle because I was like, "I'm not doing that!" We got out of practice at 1 o'clock in the morning on a good day, and then we were in a meeting until 4 o'clock in the morning. I wasn't getting any sleep and my grades were dropping. I had to keep a 2.5 GPA to keep my scholarship, so I ended up dropping.

After Denzel became the leader of his section, he was intent on ridding his section of the pledging process by discouraging students from allowing themselves to be influenced by those who supported it. He felt personally responsible for his section, particularly the freshmen.

At DSU, the university took great strides to create an environment where students were always engaged and comfortable. For instance, every Wednesday there was a DJ in the center of campus. Students, including all the fraternities and sororities, came out to either listen to the music, dance, or just hangout on "the yard." Sometimes they "strolled" and "stepped." Strolling is a party walk to music and stepping is a percussive dance where the entire body is used to produce complex rhythms and timbres through the use of claps, footsteps, and chants. Members of predominantly Black Greek organizations largely perform both. Besides these university-sponsored events, students hosted house parties throughout the week. According to Denzel, the multiple parties every day earned DSU the reputation of being a "party school."

Initially, Denzel wanted to become a member of one of the "Divine Nine," the campus Greek organizations, but became disinterested because of their activities.

I wanted to be a Kappa, but I didn't make line because I'm not down with hazing. They couldn't understand that because they did the whole pre-hazing deal. The people who actually made line were getting hazed way before they even made the line. They wanted people to buy them stuff. You had to give them a certain amount of money each week and you had to learn all this information about

certain people. And if you saw them on campus, you had to say it to them. It was a stupid process and I was like, "I'm not doing all of that! I'll do what you ask me to do when I make line, but I'm not going to do it before because that's stupid. If I don't make line, I've done all this stuff for nothing." I was like, "No!" So, I didn't make line and I was okay with it.

Denzel did pledge Phi Mu Alpha (PMA) Sinfonia. He really enjoyed being in PMA mostly because it focused on creating and sharing music among others who enjoyed music. It was also a plus that this organization did not employ hazing in the membership process.

Denzel's biology major meant that some of his experiences were quite different than the band's music-majors. Most of his classes consisted of math and science courses. He did not find these classes difficult, but eventually, he found them to be extremely boring. Despite the long and exhausting rehearsals, Denzel always looked forward to them. He took great care in arranging his schedule around band rehearsal, completing all of his assignments before rehearsal began. He also spent a couple of hours before every rehearsal in the practice room perfecting and memorizing the show music. Before he knew it, Denzel found himself really loving band. But, in the back of his head he thought, "Eh, I can't do this for a living!" During Denzel's freshman year, he began taking saxophone lessons from Dr. Galloway, the director of bands. Dr. Galloway also served as a member of the woodwind faculty and a mentor to Denzel during his undergraduate tenure at DSU, as well as years following. He was also very influential in Denzel's pursuit of a master's of music in conducting.

Throughout Denzel's first year as a member of the band, he was puzzled to know why he was accepted in the band. He started taking lessons with the saxophone and music theory professor, Dr. Galloway. The more Denzel progressed in his lessons with Dr.



Galloway, the more Dr. Galloway asked, “Are you sure you’re not a music major?” Denzel always replied by stating, “No! I’m a biology major! You are not going to convert me to become a music major! It’s not going to happen!” Denzel did extremely well in all his classes, especially in those that were music courses. Eventually, Denzel became a music minor, taking a few music classes at first and then taking more later. Denzel really wanted to play in the wind ensemble, but all of the alto saxophone spots were taken. The only open spot that was available was bassoon. Without second-guessing himself, Denzel worked really hard to learn how to play the bassoon and made it into the wind ensemble.

It was in the middle of the school year and Dr. Galloway finally sat down and told me all the specific stuff that my band director told him about me. He was like, “You’re responsible. You didn’t get in band until your junior year, but you took lessons the whole summer before just so you could be in band. You are also really committed and you were very mature.” I just remembered making sure that I was on time. I was always prepared with my music. I just did what was asked of me. I always felt like everyone else was always better, so I was always trying. I would be like, “Okay, I have to put in extra time because I got to make sure to play it with everyone else.” I had to make sure I could perform as well as everyone else because I wasn’t in band for four years, you know. So, [Dr. Galloway] didn’t actually hear me play until I got to DSU.

Denzel went on to complete all music coursework and found that he wanted to take even more music courses, so he began taking a few instrumental methods courses. He continued to take classes in music until his senior year, when he decided that he actually wanted to be a music major. He even asked his parents if he could change his major. They were shocked and upset, and demanded that he finish the first degree. Denzel respectfully received an undergraduate degree in biology. Dr. Galloway helped Denzel find the money he needed to return to DSU for the next two years to complete his music education degree. He also created an undergraduate band staff position for him.

Upon the end of Denzel's tenure at DSU, he received two undergraduate degrees; a bachelor of music in music education and bachelor of science in biology.

### **Morgan's Undergraduate Experience**

During Morgan's sophomore year in high school in Louisiana, he often attended Aldridge University football games to watch Aldridge University's Marching Band. At first sight, he became attracted to the marching band, their style of marching, song selections, and their connection with the audience. However, it wasn't until he saw Hillman State University Marching Band that he knew where he wanted to go to college. He was visiting relatives in Hillman during the Thanksgiving holiday. This was during Morgan's senior year of high school while living in Hawaii with his parents.

When I was a senior, they have this thing called the Thanksgiving Day Classic when Hillman State University would play Davis State University. When I heard Hillman State, I was just sold! It's the equivalent of choosing a football team for whatever reason. You know, your favorite football team. Hillman State was like my team. Every time I saw them, in my eyes, they were mesmerizing!

Most of all, Morgan was fascinated of the marching band's ability to perform music from both popular and classical genres. For instance, the band went from playing traditional marches such as "Stars and Stripes Forever" by John P. Sousa and "March Grandioso" by Ronald F. Seitz to performing hip-hop and R&B hits like "The Show" by Doug E. Fresh featuring Slick Rick and "Get Ready" by The Temptations. For Morgan, it was really cool to see a band play more than just pop tunes. In addition to the marching band, there were other factors that also contributed to Morgan's decision.

I always wanted to go to an HBCU band program, preferably Hillman State University, but I always wanted to have that experience because my high school experience was corps-style marching. That was one of the big reasons for HSU and I found out that out of all the HBCUs that I was familiar with HSU had one of the better all-around programs. Secondly, I knew I wanted to go to a school where

there were people who looked like me, in a sense, because I was raised in the military and we lived in a lot of different places and environments. Never felt that like I was around people that looked like me and, in a sense and kind of shared my ideas and beliefs, holistically. I was always "the minority" in an environment. . . . This is going to sound totally horrible, but I can't think of a better way to say it. I'm going to say it, but I don't mean it this way, I didn't want to be "White-washed" and I don't mean in a derogatory sense, but I just wanted to have an identify of my own. Self-identification, if you will. I just wanted to be around people who looked like me. I wanted to be around people who shared the same ideas, in a cultural sense, you know. So, that was something that was big in my eyes. But, I don't mean in a way to say what's White or what's Black. I don't even agree with those philosophies.

Morgan's family was very supportive of him pursuing a college degree. Often, his family attended football games and performances. Although Morgan's parents were living in Hawaii during his undergraduate experience, other family members including his grandparents and uncle were very supportive, by providing food and housing during weekends and holidays.

Morgan's first experience on campus was his first day of freshmen band camp. Like many freshmen entering into college, Morgan did not know what to expect, especially in band camp. After Morgan was settled into his dorm room, he attended a meeting with the band staff for both parents and students. Following the meeting, they had a rehearsal that literally consisted of them playing long tones from 6pm to 10pm. Following the rehearsal, all of the freshmen returned to their dorms and to get much needed rest because their morning would come really early, 4:45am to be exact. For Morgan, his goal was not to stand out, wake up early, and to be on time, no matter the activity. Similar to the U.S. Military, they too started their mornings with physical training (PT), consisting of running, push-ups and other extraneous exercises. Needless to

say, excluding four hours of long tones, this process would continue for about a week or more.

Morgan vaguely remembers the first day of classes. However, he was able to recall the overflow of students on the first day. Prior to that, the band and the football team were the only large student organizations on campus. Unfortunately, Morgan and his band mates were not granted the same privilege of taking care of things regarding housing, financial aid, and issues related to the business office. On the other hand, Morgan and all of his freshmen band mates instantly had over 250 people with whom that could connect with because of band camp. Due to the fact that Morgan was a freshman, he and other freshmen were not seen as official members of the marching band despite them having met the criteria to be in the band. They were seen as a group of individuals who were attempting to earn their place in the band through the “crabbing” process; thus, they would be referred to as “Crabs.”

It was not mandatory, but it was in your best interest. Well, I'll put it like this. Trumpet sections are totally different from other sections in that group. It is what it is because we had this autonomous little society—naturally trumpet players are slightly arrogant and cocky and all those other things. So, in other sections it was “optional.” But, with the trumpets, you were going to cross the trumpet section or you were no longer going to be in the trumpet section. It was predicated on building a more peaceful group, you know, being together, you had to be around those people a lot. Getting to know them, but from a freshmen standpoint it meant getting better on your instrument. For example, so we would have a meeting and we were always trying to teach accountability purposes so we would a person that's really good, you know. He'd make a comment, "Well, I got this!" Well, if you're truly going to be a leader, it's not about you because in a band setting if one person plays a bad note, they won't say that person sucks. They will say the whole group sucks. So, we really tried to build on "we" instead of "me," turning the "m" upside to a "w." . . . It would breed this type of mentality to "we have to fix this" as oppose to in places where "I'm going to do physical harm to you until you get this right. So, don't get me wrong, by definition it's still categorized as hazing. In my eyes, I think of it more as a crabbing aspect, just getting people to think more as a leader because in a true sense you can identify whom the future leaders going

to be. It's just something we just trained systematically over time to, "Why don't y'all know your music? Well, you all are going to suffer until you know this part," You know, you're only as strong as your weakest link. So, that was our mindset, so yeah that was hazing, but it wasn't done to the extent where people are dying and all this stuff. And even though people may not have liked it, in regards to the freshmen because I'm not going to say I loved it. But, after I crossed, it was the last game, the Davis game when the play clock was on zeros; we were officially a part of the section.

Membership in the band at HSU is also accompanied by an elevation of one's social status on campus. As stated in earlier experiences, the higher an individual's leadership position in the band, the more popular they become among their peers and administration on campus. According to many people in regards to sports, football is "The King" of the south (<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/12/10/king-of-the-south>); however, this observation is not true at HBCUs. At HCBUs, spectators don't attend football games to see the game, they go to see the band, whether they are playing in the stands or on the field. Being in the band was automatically accompanied by respect and pride by peers, administrative and instructional staff, as well as the surrounding community. To quote Nick Canon from the 2002 hit movie *Drumline*, "Half-time is game-time!" Morgan stated:

Well, I don't want to generalize other HBCUs because I'm not sure, but at HSU, it was unique because being in the band elevated you—status-wise. So, for example, we receive just as much amount of respect as our peers, the football players. So, when I became a section leader then head section leader, my "social status profile" grew to where if you walked on campus with a band shirt, you know, you were cool. Like if you were in high school and you were a jock. Even though we were in band and because of the things that we did, you know, it made it for a very unique experience. Because I was already in the band and with a leadership role in band and in a fraternity (Alpha Phi Alpha) with a leadership role in the fraternity, it kind of just totally elevated my status. . . . That wasn't my intentions, it's just—it is what it is, you know. People would say, "That boy's in the band" or "Oh, we saw him marching. Oh, you're a part of that fraternity." It was very unique to that campus and it may be similar to other HBCUs. But when I hear other colleagues talk about their experience in band, they told me that they were

looked down on or seen as lame. But, we were the cool folks. If there was a party going on and the band came in, we would get in free. It was just a huge level of social respect for our band.

Academically, Morgan suggests that HSU's music program was just as good as any other music program in the country. Morgan participated in a number of music ensembles during his tenure at HSU. Some of those ensembles included not only the marching band, but the orchestra, jazz and concert band, as well as various chamber groups. Similar to his professors in his master's experiences at GSU, Morgan's professors at HSU also had high standards, particularly his trumpet professor, Michelle Graham who was one of two White professors that Morgan encountered. Although he does not credit her as a mentor, Morgan enjoyed her attention to detail and her refusal to accept mediocrity from students, including him. She was strict and well respected by all of the students in the school of music.

Morgan also credits HSU as having prepared him socially to engage people from various backgrounds and ethnicities as well as providing a positive atmosphere for all students.

There was always something going on the yard, the strip, or the plot. The plot was a designated place on campus for members of my fraternity. The strip or the plaza really where on Fridays they had something called the "hot spot." From like 12 to 1pm, they would always have a DJ. It was always like a little party. It sounds crazy, you know, you're at a university and you have these parties. But, it really opened yourself up to society and life, for me, if you will. So, it was always just cool being there.

Despite the student population at HSU consisting of at least 95% African American students, there was a collection of various types of personalities and beliefs, either separated due the stratification of race or perhaps brought together for the same reason.

Just to see different types of people because even though most of the people there are African American or Black, you have so many different personalities. You know, you have the people the eclectic people, neo-soul, all the people who everything is Black power and “the man is out to get us.” And you had people who smoked marijuana and “free birds,” and so even within one societal group, there are so many different facets to that. . . . Even with “Black,” you got people who were light-skinned or dark-skinned and that means, “I’m from mother Africa.” There were so many ideas that you really had to navigate and you had to figure out how to make that work, socially . . . It’s very multifaceted. Yeah, we’re all Black, but man, people are night and day from each other.

Morgan graduated from HSU with a bachelor’s degree in music education.

### **Johnathan’s Undergraduate Experience**

Johnathan chose to attend Sumter A&M University (SAMU) because of the marching band and its marching style. While in high school, Johnathan secretly admired the marching style of the bands in Ivanville that were predominantly Black. Johnathan did not see a difference between an HBCU and a PWI. As a matter of fact, he didn’t know what an HBCU was until he took a course titled *The History of SAMU*. Johnathan knew that he was going to go to college and get a degree. It also helped to know that some his high school friends would also attend SAMU and he would receive a full scholarship through the school of music. In addition, as an active National Guardsman, Johnathan received educational assistance from the state National Guard, which included the GI Bill and tuition assistance.

Although Johnathan’s parents did not go to a four-year college, they were very supportive of their son’s choice. Particularly, Johnathan’s father conducted his own research in efforts to help his son find the best school. After learning that Johnathan was accepted into SAMU, his parents helped him move to college as well as assist him in

getting settled into his dorm. From the first home football game to Johnathan's senior recital, his parents were there to cheer him on.

Like Chris, Johnathan was immediately immersed into the culture and workings of freshmen band camp only two days after graduating from Basic Combat Training (BCT) in Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Given that, for many HBCU marching bands, it pays to be in the best shape you possibly can be, Johnathan, was in great shape. So, in morning PT sessions, Johnathan always finished second or first, unfortunately, bringing unsolicited attention to him. In addition, Johnathan came from a very affluent band program in Ivanville, affording him the opportunity to be more musically equipped than many of the student leaders and upperclassmen in the band. Often, Johnathan corrected the upperclassmen on missed notes and articulation that they had been playing wrong for years. However, this type of behavior was not received well by the upperclassmen, creating additional attention that Johnathan didn't need.

Despite the fact that the band was recovering from previous years' intervention proceedings by the university due to hazing incidents, residual structures of hazing emerged during Johnathan's entire experience in the marching band, influencing students' status in the band through the process of pledging. As explained by most of the participants in this study, pledging may include some hazing aspects like paddling, verbal and other physical altercations. According to Johnathan, there was a different vibe between the pledging process that took place decades ago and what was then current.

Back then, you learned stuff. It was more of "Can you play all your scales?" And if you couldn't, you would get knocked upside the head. It was more of, "We will show you how to do it, first. You will have to do everything I can do and I'm going to make sure that you know and I'm going to show you." Now, it's more like, "I can't, but you still have to do it." But, about the time it got to my



generation it was more of "I'm just trying to beat you more than the generation before me. I'm just trying to make a name for myself." There was no pride in it. It was just, "I pledged something. I did it." It was just something to make themselves feel like they were a part of something. It became more of a club and less of a feat or an accomplishment. Honestly, I feel like if I could go to that school in like 1972, I probably would have pledged the band because I feel that back then I would come out a better person. I would have learned stuff. I would know things. But, I didn't have to pledge because what they were doing at that point was a whole bunch of bullcrap. . . . I just feel that HBCUs are kind of pointed out for that part of their culture, but I don't see it as something that's only at HBCUs. It's more public because I guess we're more proud of it or I'm not sure why, but it is.

Partly due to the fact that Johnathan was very confident in his playing ability and musical knowledge, he chose not to pledge the band. However, because he chose not to pledge, he was treated differently.

Going to my freshmen year of band camp, I didn't pledge the band. I was kind of an outcast. If you don't pledge the band, you're not supposed to be a section leader. You're not supposed to have any leadership roles. You're not supposed to be really significant in the band. You're supposed to go through the motions and graduate.

The band director of the marching band, Mr. Nettle, often gave Johnathan the opportunity to lead his peers, partially due to his active role in the state National Guard Band and his skill level. There were times when Johnathan rehearsed the band on his own, sometimes without warning from the director. But, his peers would sabotage the rehearsal—they hated him.

I would get on the podium and they would not play. They would just look at the music or they would play the wrong note on purpose so it wouldn't be performed. Not pledging the band made my life more difficult. If I would have went through the motions of "Okay beat me. Hit me, " it would have been like, "Sure, you can do this, you do that." I wouldn't have had any problems with them.

SAMU is a predominantly Black, with a small percentage of international and White students and professors. However, many of the international students were there on

sports scholarships, particularly in soccer and track. According to Johnathan, there were basically seven White students in the whole school and three of those were in the marching band. In Johnathan's description of the White population of students in his interview he expressed that the faces of those who were in the band are still very clear in his mind. One played the flute. Another played horn and the other played trumpet. Johnathan also included that White students in particular received full scholarships because they were minority students.

Outside of the marching band, Johnathan excelled. He found his classes to be extremely easy and in many cases easier than many his classes in high school, even those classes in music. For majority of Johnathan's freshmen year, he didn't attend some of his music classes, not because he was lazy or irresponsible, but because he already knew all of the material based on his music experience in high school. So, he only showed up to those classes on test days. His professor often got upset with him because he would not attend. His professor occasionally offered Johnathan advice by stating, "I'm going to catch up with you. I'm going to get you. You are going to come in here one day and you're not going to know what's going on." Unfortunately for the professor, he did not "catch up" with Johnathan. For instance, Johnathan didn't start attending music theory class until his sophomore year.

Due to the fact that Johnathan received a really good education during his high school experience, he found himself becoming disinterested in attending class because he already knew the much of the information. Unfortunately, due to his disengagement, he would be forced to learn some hard lessons.

He was kind of more of the teacher you didn't "bull crap" with. He had a policy that if you're late for a class, you were not allowed to turn in your work. So, if you showed up and the door was locked, you just didn't turn in your work. There was no such thing as makeup. We only had three papers to turn in and it also doubled as a conducting exam. So, we had a paper about the piece that we conducted. I wrote it, but I was late and I got a zero. So, if you missed one of those turn-ins it was instantly a 'D' for your total grade.

In order for the class to count towards his degree, Johnathan would have had to make a 'C' or better. Unfortunately, he had to retake the class the following semester. Needless to say, Johnathan learned his lesson—always arrive early.

Another lesson Johnathan learned was in his secondary education class where he was asked to drop the class because he was in danger of failing the class. The professor noticed that Johnathan wasn't taking the class serious enough and he wasn't meeting the expectations of the class in regards to turning in assignments on time and attendance. After failing his conducting class and being asked to drop his secondary education class, Johnathan decided to buckle down and approach the rest of his classes with the intent to do well and prove his professors wrong. In his new approach, when Johnathan felt as though he wasn't being challenged in his classes, he found other ways to increase his workload and learn as much as he could. For instance, Johnathan took popular tunes as well as jazz charts and arranged them for jazz combos and the marching band. He also tasked himself to learn how to play the flute just as well as he played his saxophone.

Johnathan found that the teachers at SAMU were very honest and upfront about the realities that he would encounter as a future music educator. He enjoyed the fact that many of his professors taught by sharing personal experiences in regards to their own experiences as public school music educators.

The Black teachers were cool. They taught more on a personal level and I felt like those teachers kind of made me the teacher I am today. The things they talked and they said, it was 100% true. I had one teacher in the education department. She would tell me that when get out teaching, I'm not going to have any money. She also talked about kids not having enough food to eat. She would talk about kids acting up to get money for their parents . . . a check. She said that I would basically be teaching at an all Black school. . . . And when I finished at SAMU, I was getting phone calls from predominantly Black schools . . . But, that's where I wanted to be. That was my decision. I had an interview for a predominantly Whites school and I just didn't see myself enjoying that. I feel more like a "sellout," honestly if I were to go to one of those schools with a picture perfect community and I did all of this work. I'm less than one percent of Black males. Most importantly, while at schools like this with these types of situations, I can say that at least I was told about them.

Although the social environment at SAMU was very social, Johnathan had a very different background than many of his peers, particularly their socioeconomic status. For instance, because he grew up in a middle class family, Johnathan wasn't able to relate to the stories many of his peers shared in casual conversations about some of the economic challenges they encountered prior to attending SAMU. For instance, some of his peers would say, "Man, I remember when I had to use an iron to make a grilled cheese sandwich." Experiences like that were totally foreign to Johnathan.

On campus, if you weren't one of the "cool kids," you were treated like an "outcast." But, for the most part, people respected Johnathan on campus because he was in the marching band. The marching band at SAMU was "the face" of the school.

The band is cooler than the football players. People didn't go to the game to see the football players. We practiced harder than the football team. Actually, we were the hardest working group on that campus. People didn't mess with band. You didn't even cross the line when the band was marching to the stadium. All 250 of members of the band had to walk by before you could get to your seat. It was part of the culture and it was understood. And it was a sign of respect, but if you crossed, there could be physical fallout. It's a lot different than Falgout (Predominantly White high school). The traditional band nerd doesn't exist at an HBCU. It's kind of a 180.

Johnathan's membership into Nu Rho Sigma, the Negro Philharmonic Society for Historically Black Students, was a great way for him to meet other students who also didn't quite fit in and were in some ways considered to also be "outcasts." During his senior year, Johnathan also pledged Alpha Phi. Through both organizations, Johnathan and his fellow Greek sisters and brothers engaged in various community services projects surrounding the campus. Johnathan lived on campus in university housing until his junior year when he decided to move into an off-campus apartment.

### **PWI Experiences**

#### **Karl's Graduate Experience**

Karl considered three PWI graduate music programs, Western Illinois University, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Trapper State University (TSU) because they offered a fellowship in percussion performance. Of those, Karl chose TSU largely because the African American student population was more accepting of each other and it was most affordable for him and his wife.

Karl's parents were very happy that he chose to continue his education. Due to busy schedules and the distance between them and their son, his parents weren't able to attend many of his performances. However, Karl's father surprised him at his master's jazz recital. The only thing that his parents weren't too pleased about was his choice to marry immediately after completing his undergraduate degree at BU.

At BU, Karl was the most experienced concert percussionist in the percussion studio, but at TSU, he could no longer describe himself that way because everyone in the percussion studio was very good. In the second rehearsal of one of the percussion ensembles Karl wasn't completely prepared, and his professor explained the way things

were done at TSU: “Here, if you don't have it one day, you're expected to have it at the next rehearsal.” Karl took note and without complaint made adjustments, ensuring that he would be prepared for every rehearsal thereafter.

Karl also took remedial graduate music theory and history courses because his music Graduate Records Exam (GRE) score was low. He didn't mind because he had not encountered many of the course topics during his undergraduate experience at BU. He also enjoyed the better facilities and access to far more plentiful percussion equipment than he had had at BU. Although Karl did not consider himself having enough skill to do well as a drummer, he was placed in one of TSU's three large jazz bands. Seeing that Karl needed some help, his jazz instructor took him under his wing and provided him the necessary knowledge that he needed to be a successful jazz drummer. To further improve his drumming skills, Karl also took it upon himself to also perform in various music groups outside of the school of music. These performances also gave Karl and his wife additional money to help pay for necessities.

Karl thought the music faculty found him to be somewhat of an anomaly because he was Black and he came from an HBCU. He also believed that, based on their questions, many faculty members perceived him of as not being able to “cut it” because he came from an HBCU, although they never told him that. After consistently proving that he was just as good as his counterparts and that his work ethic was just as palpable, his professors began to ask questions like, “Do you have any school mates that might want to come down here that are as good as you?”

Karl's White percussion professor, Dr. Keaton, was not as helpful as he had hoped. To Karl, it seemed as though he was investing much more time and effort into

everyone else than him. During his first year at TSU, Karl sometimes would enter the percussion studio to hear Dr. Keaton sharing information with White students that he did not convey to Karl, and he began to feel that his professor often purposely left him in the dark regarding important information and performance opportunities. Following similar incidents, Karl decided that in order to get the information he needed, he had to be proactive. At every chance, Karl asked as many questions as he could of his Dr. Keaton to oblige him to answer. Had he not been proactive, Karl believes that he would not have received the information as freely as his White peers.

Later on during the same year, the local professional symphony sponsored a concerto competition. That year it was reserved for only percussionists. At the time, Karl's percussion professor, Dr. Keaton, was the orchestra's timpanist and he knew all of the details regarding the competition. While he informed Karl's White peers over a month prior to the competition in January, Karl learned about it only a few days before Christmas break. Adding to Karl's frustration, he knew that he learned about the other two graduate percussion programs he applied to by being observant of the BU information board, he was sure that he would not have missed an announcement of the competition if it were posted on an information board in the School of Music.

The following year, Karl had the opportunity to perform a solo piece at the annual Modern Music Festival in Merkel. The piece he performed was also performed by his Dr. Keaton, but with music. It was a very difficult piece of music. However, when Karl performed it, he performed it well and without the aid of music. Everyone was talking about his performance and how great of a job he did. Some of Karl's peers also performed at the festival. But, Karl found it interesting that his professor attended all of

the percussion students' performances that were scheduled early in the morning on a Saturday, but not his performance on Thursday in the afternoon. Despite neglect and a lack of interest of his percussion professor, Karl continued to work hard in his classes, while summing his professor's actions to covert racism. To this day, Karl hopes that his professor's actions were subconscious.

Karl estimated that African American students made up 5 to 10% of the student population, including many student athletes at TSU. At most, there were 25 African Americans in the School of Music; Karl was one of two African Americans in the master's program. In all his classes, he was "the Black guy." Some of Karl's peers were curious about him. One day in one of the hallways of the school of music, one of his peers pulled him to the side stating, "Wow, you just kind of take things real serious!" Instead of replying with the words he wanted to use (I don't like being around White people), he simply stated, "I have things to do!"

I will admit that I did walk around with a look on my face all the time. I had my "Cowell look" on. Those that I was cool with, I was cool with them, but as for all the rest of the people I was like, "You all are White people." That was what was in my mind. You probably wouldn't help me if given the opportunity. You wouldn't help me, so I know I got to get mine and I got to practice to do what I got to do. Like I said before, I was raised on the "you got to be twice as good to get half as much" syndrome. So, I carried that. I was like, "This here. It is what it is."

Karl also wore his Africa medallion around his neck. When I asked if the medallion had a specific meaning or any significance, Karl stated, "I wore it because I'm Black and I wanted you to know that I was Black."

Noticing that there were few spaces where he and other graduate African Americans could fellowship, Karl created a group that provided graduate music students



who were African American a place to socialize. He called it the “Black caucus.” Sometimes they had picnics and cookouts where they fellowshiped and conversed. For the most part, many of them came from a “Black situation.” Karl describes Black situations as spaces that are predominantly Black (i.e. predominantly Black community, childhood). Karl shares:

The people that came from Black situations, they appreciated the fact that they had the opportunity to hangout and just be Black and not have to put on “the face.” We didn’t have to watch the way we said things. I'm not talking about cursing, but slang terms that we would not feel comfortable using around Whites. It was cool.

Karl believed that the presence of the Black caucus served as an identity reference for African American undergraduate music students even though he did not invite them to attend the meetings.

Karl really wasn’t involved in the Phi Mu Alpha and Kappa Kappa Psi fraternity chapters at TSU. For additional socializing, Karl crossed the train tracks to hangout with the chapters at Prescott A&M University (PAMU), an HBCU. When I asked why he preferred to hangout with the PAMU chapters rather than the TSU chapters, Karl stated, “Well, because they were Black. I'm serious. Understand this is the mid 1980s. While it sounds modern, it was fifteen years after the D.C. riots in 1968.”

Not only did Karl come to realize that he was one of very few African Americans in the music department, he also noticed that White people really didn’t know much about Black culture or its important Black political and social figures. Karl explains:

So, I'm on the shuttle bus going back to my apartment and I hear these two guys talking. They were White. One of them had gone to history class and the other had not. So, the one that hadn't gone was asking what had gone on. The other guy was like, "Well, man. We were talking about some dude. I don't remember his name. I never heard of him before. Ah, Malcolm X." I remember thinking to

myself, "How do you get to college and never learn about Malcolm X?" But, I remember someone saying that when you are African American in America, you grow up at the very least bi-cultural. At the very least, just from a racial standpoint and that's not getting to class and school and SES. But, White people they just don't have to know. There's nothing making them know it. If they went to school that didn't teach them and they would make them know. Their parents may not say anything to them about it or anything. . . . It's not just a White or Black thing. It's a country thing. In Mexico they don't teach about the Alamo. Here they don't teach about the Child Heroes of Chapultepec where the U.S. invaded Mexico City, attacking a fort that was basically guarded by raw recruit cadets and so they beat a bunch of teenagers. But, we've never heard of that. In England, the king was just doing what he had to do because the Yanks were tripping. That's how they teach it over there.

Currently, Karl is helping his son prepare to transition from high school to college. In preparing his son for college, Karl will explain to his son that there will be individuals who will measure him based upon his race instead of his work ethic and character. Karl shares:

I'm getting ready to have that talk with my son. We live in a predominantly White area and he's about to go to University of McClain, but the thing is, the people in school he only hangs out with are band students. So, they're in the same area and they have been going to the same school. But, when he goes to college, there will be people from everywhere and they're not his friends. I need him to have an understanding of that.

Today, Karl serves as an associate band director at Orange State University, an inner city HBCU in McClain. He is also pursuing a Ph.D. in music education. When asked the question, "How did you make it," Karl stated:

I would say the Blackness of my upbringing because of the way we were taught. Like I said before, I came up during the "To be Young, Gifted, and Black" Era. I came up where you have to do this for your race. You have to be a credit to your people. You cannot misrepresent your people. You have the talent. You have the intelligence. You should be something. You are to be something. That was what I was around. . . . I made it because of that upbringing. It was like this--you are supposed to do this. I was told that I had a purpose in life. That's how I made it.

## **Michael's Graduate Experience**

Michael always knew that he wanted to pursue a master's degree in music education. But, he credits one of his professors at KAMU with providing the advice to pursue a master's degree at a PWI because he would already have received an undergraduate degree from a HBCU. Knowing what both degrees could offer, Michael felt as though collectively they would make him more marketable when looking for a job, particularly in higher education. However, Michael wanted to be able to work full-time as a band director while going to graduate school to support his wife and children. While attending the state Music Educators Association conference, Michael acquired information regarding an evening master's of music education program at the University of Rockfield recruitment booth, just what he was looking for. He applied to the program at UR and was accepted. Instead of applying for loans, he managed to pay out of pocket. However, upon becoming a full-time graduate student, he was awarded and accepted \$1,000 scholarship.

Michael's experiences as a student at UR were not as friendly as has had envisioned. He recalls early experiences in class:

I was a nervous wreck. I don't know why I was so nerved up because the people in class with me were educators themselves. I guess it was because when I walked into the first class and I looked around, I was like, "I'm the only Black person." That was the first thing I noticed. It was not that I was the only male or one of three males. No, I was the only Black person in here. . . . Eventually, we started sharing our experiences and things and that kind of broke that social barrier of communication. I'd say after about two weeks, I was okay. I was just nervous, but I still did the work. I remember in class in just doing the coursework, I just had this thing like I have to work five times as hard as everybody else, because they are going to be expecting me not to know certain things based on the way I look—the skin color thing.

Michael felt his peers and professors found his experiences both deficient and less valuable.

They would be like, "Well, he teaches in the inner city and they don't have the same experiences that we have in our successful programs." But, I didn't care about that. My thing was, "I have more knowledge than you because I have to work twenty times as hard to make the things work. You guys stepped into a position where everything was already setup for you. You really didn't have to do much. You really didn't have to struggle. Your struggle may have been, "they didn't water the grass this week. Darn it, that's going to throw us off."

I had a professor who was from Massachusetts . . . I told him that I taught at Capital High School and lived in the neighborhood, but he didn't drive to UR. He rode a bicycle. He was like, "You teach at that school!" I was like, "Yeah, I'm the band director there." He just kept saying, "My goodness, you teach at that school?" I was like, "What is it!" He said, "I was riding my bike home one evening and I passed by a set of apartments over there and there were students out there and they took my bike from me. They literally mugged me." I had to tell him that every student that goes there is not like that.

Michael was amazed by UR's facilities and resources, noticing immediately that it was more resourced than KAMU. He was particularly impressed by the rehearsal and performance facilities. Sometimes, composers of some of the pieces performed by the ensembles also attended rehearsals along with various world-class conductors. Michael truly enjoyed observing wind ensemble rehearsals. Michael also appreciated the fact that the director of bands facilitated an exchange between the band programs at UR and Orange State University, an HBCU also located in downtown McClain. They often exchanged music from their libraries and they also attend each other's performances and rehearsals. Despite the great opportunities at UR, Michael noticed that he was sort of "the odd man out" or even the "invisible man." He explains:

I remember the other graduate students wouldn't really talk to me, so I had to be the one to initiate conversation. They would go and make copies of scores so that they could study during rehearsal and I would be sitting there without a score. I would have to look on with others. So, I went to the director and asked if I could

get a copy of the score. He told them to make a copy for me and I think the only female student who was Hispanic said that she would get the scores for me. So, we became good friends. Anything I didn't have she helped me get it and she and another student, a White guy who taught at an Episcopalian school, were the only ones who pretty much spoke to me. The rest of them were all White males.

It was very few, far, and in between when these people spoke. I would be like, "Man, what's wrong with these White people." I would speak to them. There were a few times when I would speak to them and they wouldn't say anything. I'd be like, excuse my French, "That bastard didn't speak to me! Do they not have any good home-training where you learn to speak to someone after they speak to you?" After a while I had to let that go because I would go home and just be upset. They thought they knew everything . . . I think it was just because of the color of my skin. That's what I think it was.

The isolation Michael experienced in his classes also continued outside of class.

Michael always found himself alone during most of his time on campus. He states:

There would be days where I would go hours without ever having to talk to someone. You know, really talk to someone. So, when I would get home, I would talk my wife's head off. She would say, "Dang, you are talking my head off! Why are you talking so much?" I would say, "I don't have anyone to talk to." She'd be like, "Boy, you better learn how to deal with those people." And I would say, "I don't have a problem with them. They have a problem with me." They don't make you feel welcomed, like, "I'm glad to have you here." Instead, it's kind of like, "What are you doing here." I'm like, "Damn, man, you all are right in a neighborhood that is over 90% Black and you're acting surprised that you are going to see a Black person in School of Music. Come on, now!" It's crazy.

Michael pledged KKPsi at KAMU, where it was reserved for males only. Despite their racial or ethnical differences, their brotherhood remained strong. Michael assumed that those standards would also be the same at UR—it wasn't. KKPsi was coed and Michael wasn't welcomed even though he was considered "a brother" of the organization. Michael explains:

They didn't know that I was a part of KKPsi. I told my wife that I was going to wear my fraternity shirt and I'm going to wear it to class one day. I'm going to walk through the music department. One of the standards of the organization is that when you see another brother, you greet that brother. You find out what campus they're from and things like. The first day that I wore my shirt, I literally

walked around. It was like social test. I was like, "Let me see what's going to happen." I walked by a handful of brothers with the same shirt I had on and they didn't say anything to me. They looked and I looked and nothing happened. I intentionally found two others and they didn't say anything. I went home and talked my wife and I said, "They don't want Black people at that university in that department!" I said, "I don't even know why I pledged this. I should have pledged one of the Divine Nine." (All nine members of the predominantly Black National Pan-Hellenic Council [NPHC]: Alpha Kappa Alpha, Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Omega Psi Phi, Delta Sigma Theta, Phi Beta Sigma, Zeta Phi Beta, Sigma Gamma Rho, and Iota Phi Theta.)

He wore another letter shirt the following week, and was surprised to receive a different response from a Hispanic student in the men's restroom. Michael recalls the account:

I was in the men's room and a Hispanic student came in and he had his shirt on. After washing up he said, "Excuse me. Are you a brother here? Are you a part of our chapter?" And I was like, "No." Then I told him what chapter I was from and he was like, "Wow!" So, we did the handshake thing and the whispering into the ear and he and I immediately hit it off. I was like, "Okay. That's one. Out of a year and half—one brother. Out of hundreds of KKPsi brothers—one." I was like, "Boy, let me write about this!"

Michael felt as though if the KKPsi members of the chapter at UR were more welcoming, he would have participated in the organization. In addition, he just didn't have enough time to participate given that he was also a husband, father, and full-time high school band director during his first year.

Despite experiences of isolation, Michael found the professors and staff to be fair and very nice. Although UR was a PWI, there was a large population of Asian students as well as Hispanics, but a small percentage of African Americans. Overall, there were more male professors and students than there were female. Michael noticed that specifically in the wind ensembles at UR, there was only one African American male. But, the following year, there were four. To Michael, this increase meant one of two things: 1) the

UR school of music was attempting to meet a quota or 2) the school of music started to open their doors, noticing that African Americans can perform well.

Presently, Michael serves as director of bands at Perkins College, an HBCU located in Quincy. He is also in the early stages of writing a book regarding issues of race and inequality in music education based on his and others' experiences.

When I asked how he made it," Michael replied:

First, it was because of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That's the first thing-- just having that background in faith when things got hard and money got tight. Praying, persevering, and being diligent about what I wanted to accomplish.

[I made it] by having a goal and sticking to it. . . . Just achieving that goal. I had the goal in front of me. . . . Staying focused and not letting it go. You know, you see a lot of people and they set goals and they go through adversity and then they say, "Oh it's not worth it." Then, they end up not achieving what they set for themselves to achieve. I always tell myself that I don't want to be one of those people saying, "I could've, would've, should've." I never wanted to do that. It included me walking away from a very good high school position with some really decent money to me and my wife living on one income and making financial changes we needed to make to graduate.

### **Nathan's Graduate Experience**

Nathan's mentors at PAMU were so influential in Nathan's music education that he also chose to attend the same university as they did for his master's degree, the University of Chandler. According to Nathan, "If it was good enough for them, it was good enough for him." Due to his mentors' connections with UC, Nathan was able to acquire a full scholarship. His scholarship required him to be a camp counselor at the Chandler Summer Youth Music program (CSYM), sponsored by the school of music. While the scholarship covered tuition, housing, and meals, it also provided a stipend of \$1,400 every month. Throughout Nathan's undergraduate experience, he always knew he wanted to attend a bigger school and UC was certainly a viable choice.

Nathan enrolled in the summer master's of music education program that required him to attend classes for seven weeks for three summers. This degree option was very convenient for Nathan because he was also a full-time high school band director in Corman at the time. Nathan found it very helpful to have chosen to attend the summer program because it allowed him to immediately apply the things he learned to his teaching in Corman.

Nathan's family was very supportive of him pursuing a master's degree, especially knowing that he was in the field of education. They encouraged him to pursue the highest degree because it would guarantee a greater salary than that of only a bachelor's degree.

Nathan wasn't able to recall his first day on campus. However, he was able to remember his morning meetings with Dr. Peterson, the director of bands. Nathan shares:

Although my track was music education, I got to spend a lot of time with Peterson every morning at 8:30, four days a week. It was basically the Peterson show. He would just come in and he would talk for two or three hours and we would listen to these rare Grainger recordings and we would analyze all these master works. He was just infatuated with Grainger. If anything stood out about the experience, it was that time. When I see him today, he would always ask me, "Nate, are you still listening? You got to listen! Don't listen to these new guys. Listen to the old guys." It was really interesting.

Nathan found the campus and the school of music of his master's experience to be much bigger than that of his undergraduate experience. The university as a whole was very diverse. However, Nathan was the only African American in all his music classes. Only one of Nathan's professors were African American and he taught education policy. This professor was very instrumental in facilitating Nathan's experience at UC. Nathan shares:

I only needed like four credits to graduate and I needed all those hours in education policy [from within] the college of education. The only classes they



were offering were three-hour classes. So, I was like, I'm going to have to come back next summer for a class. So, he allowed me to do independent study with him. He was writing a book and I was helping him edit it. He was the only Black professor I had. He didn't know me from anybody. I would send him my résumé on Monday and on Tuesday he signed off on me being able to study with him. Then, he was an associate professor and now he's like the associate dean for the college of education. I keep that contact with him and he would invite to his house with his wife. He was just trying to look out for a young graduate, you know.

Overall, Nathan's experience at UC was very positive. His peers were professional and encouraging. Occasionally, they would go out for dinner or just to hangout in the popular part of campus. Sometimes, one of his professors would have them meet at a restaurant to do score-study.

Today, Nathan serves as an associate professor of music education at Prescott A&M University. He also serves as the chair for the music education department. Nathan, when I asked, "How did he make it," replied:

It was through good mentors and good teachers and great support that I was successful. I mean there are a lot of smart people in the world, but if you don't have mentors or people you've seen being successful or people you can model yourself after, then it's kind of hard to know how far you can go. You have to have role models so you can know what can be accomplished or to improve upon what they've done. And vice versa.

### **Darren's Graduate Experience**

During Darren's last semester of student teaching at KAMU, he applied to several graduate music programs: The University of Pullam (UP), the University of Cayman (UC), the University of McClain (UM), State Union University (SUU), and the University of Macon. Of those five schools, the University of Cayman (UC) was the only school he did not audition for due to distance. During his auditioning experiences at various schools, Darren found out just how unprepared he was. At UM, Darren didn't even get through his pieces without the professors stopping him after only less than

twenty minutes. They gave him a nod and a brief “Okay, thank you,” sending him on his way. Following Darren’s audition at SUU, instead of sending Darren a letter in the mail, Dr. Allen, the percussion professor actually took time out of schedule to personally call him to inform him that he didn’t get into the program. However, their communication didn’t stop there, the professor offered to give Darren lessons free of charge. Dr. Allen told Darren that although he didn’t get in, he was a diamond in the rough and he wanted to help him get to the next level. According to Darren, this was when he realized that he was further behind his peers than he realized and it really hurt him. Darren explains:

That's when I knew that my undergrad experience wasn't the best thing. I felt I didn't learn everything I needed to know because that was the first time I went into the real world and I was slapped in the face with reality. I wasn't as prepared. I wasn't as good or I wasn't on the same level as my peers. And that really hurt. That really hurt! It hurt to know that I had been spending money and tuition and time and effort in a practice room. Then, I get out to know that where I'm supposed to be the best player coming from KAMU and I'm not even on the level of a sophomore. The material that I was playing was material that high school seniors played for their entrance exams.

Although Darren was very disappointed to know that his skillset was less than acceptable to enter into a master’s program, he was determined to pick himself up and try again. So, he drove to Hilton, to audition for the master’s program at UP. While warming up in the practice room for his audition, Professor Bennett, the percussion professor, heard him. He told Darren that based off what he heard he could get him into the program. In disbelief, Darren responded, “What! Just off of this? I’m just playing scales!” Darren went on to audition, but to him, it didn’t feel like an audition. Darren shares his experience:

It was an audition, but it was more like a private lesson. Every piece I played he would say, "Oh, that's good! I've played this piece before and I like your interpretation. Well, try this and this is how I play it." Then he played it. And I

was like, "Man, what's going on! This dude knows his stuff!" He went from marimba to timpani pieces while providing historical background for all of them. When I went to play the drumset, he talked about three or four different styles and he was like, Oh, you played drums in church, huh?" I was like, "Yeah!" So, he just asked me to play something that I would play at church and I started playing "shout music." [*Imitating the sound of the beat*]. He then told me where that type of music came from. He just broke everything down and it made me feel extremely comfortable and I felt like that this was the place for me. I felt like I had a mentor and his name was Dr. Bennett. After I left, I said, "Regardless of where I get into, I'm going to go to UP!"

Darren was accepted in the master's program at UP and continued to strive to be the best. Darren chose UP because he wanted to have a different experience than that at KAMU. At the time, there was only one HBCU that offered a master's degree in percussion performance. He also chose UP because of the positive experience he had in his audition with Dr. Bennett.

Given the state's history regarding racism, many of Darren's family and friends were concerned for his safety. They constantly asked him, "Do you really want to go to that state? Do you know anyone out there? Are you going to be okay? Are you sure?" Without skipping a beat, Darren replied by saying, "Yeah, I'm going to go! Where else am I going to go? Am I going to stay at home? No, I'm not going to stay at home!" Overall, his friends and family were very supportive and very happy to see him pursuing an advanced college degree. Particularly, his mother and his favorite aunt, Tina, often drove to Hilton from Burch to attend his recitals and other performances. However, his entire family and friends attended his graduation, making it a weekend filled with family events.

While driving to Hilton from Burch for graduate school, Darren posted his location and observations on Facebook so his friends and family back home could

experience his journey too. Once he arrived to the campus of UP and moved into his apartment, he drove around campus. He was blown away by how much bigger things were. After seeing the football stadium, Darren jokingly stated, “Ah, man! Over 50,000 people can sit in there. KAMU’s little stadium can hold like 50 people.” Darren was overwhelmed by the fact that he made it and he was a part of a major institution. One of the things that really shocked Darren while he was driving around on campus was his encounter with people running on campus. He didn’t know whether to drive off really fast or wait to see what they were running from. According to “the unwritten rulebook” of his old neighborhood, when you see people running, you should run too and if possible, run faster than them because obviously they are running away from trouble. As it turned out, the people he saw running on campus were just exercising.

Even class attire was different at UP than it was at KAMU. Darren shares:

At KAMU or any HBCU, it's a fashion show. At times, I would be like, "Why are you wearing this stuff to class?" There would be people wearing school stuff, but a lot of days you would think that people at HBCUs are going to the club or something based on the things they wore. But, at UP, everyone just looked like they just got out bed. They would put their stuff on with their backpack on their back and they were ready to go. That's how I started to dress. I never ironed anymore. I threw my things in the dryer with a wet towel. I was like, "I'm going to class. Who am I trying to impress? I'm not trying impress anyone! If you want to see me, you're going to see me like this. This is business!"

Darren was also elated when he found out that he would have money to purchase all of the things he needed for all of his classes before they started.

I wasn't used to the money being there before school started. To know that I was supposed to have the book on the first day of class I was like, “Oh, no.” I wasn't used to that. I was used to going to class, getting the syllabus, and having to tell the professor that my refund check hasn't come and that I didn't have the money. You have to wait for weeks to get your refund check. Then, you have to get the book on Amazon. No, at UP, these professors sent the syllabus out at least a week

before classes started. So, my money came and I could order it on Amazon and rush ship it! So, when I got to class, I had everything! I was ready . . .

And I'm looking around, but I'm not the only one that was ready. People had brand new books, crisp and without any creases in them! Ah, yeah! It was cool! I was kind of shocked. I sat in the front because I didn't want to miss anything. Because I had all my stuff, I had no reason to hide. So, if the professor wanted to call on me, I was ready! I wasn't going to be one those people hiding.

Unfortunately, some of Darren's peers were not very welcoming.

Whenever people would ask me where I was from, I would always say, "I'm Darren Jordan and I'm from McClain!" So, they would be like, "What school did you go to?" I would say, "KAMU." They would say with that look, "Where is that?" I would reply, "It's an HBCU outside of McClain." Then you would get this, "Oh." . . . I just remember being anxious to prove myself. I wanted to prove that I belonged. I wasn't some dumb or stupid person. I wanted to prove myself and that I'm alright. I'm here. I belong!

One of Darren's professors at KAMU recommended that he research Marvin Sutton, his life and his relationship with UP before attending the school. Darren did exactly that and he found that Sutton was incredibly courageous despite racially fueled opposition upon entering UP. One day during Darren's first semester he was walking on campus and unexpectedly encountered the unveiling of the statue of Marvin Sutton, the first African American to be admitted into UP. It was that day when Darren made up in his mind to not only do his best, but exceed all the expectations placed in front of him. While closely viewing the statue of Sutton, Darren told himself, "If this man had to get beaten up just to attend class, why would I waste my time?" Darren went on to become the first African American to win the concerto competition at UP.

However, during Darren's tenure at UP he also noticed that while UP and other PWIs made sure their students were well informed and equipped with an abundance of resources, many students at these schools took their experience for granted.

I think a lot times at PWIs they take the resources for granted. They just think that it's the norm and it is the norm. I'm not saying it's a bad thing, but it should be the norm everywhere. But, at HBCUs it's not. So, when I got somewhere where they had the resources, oh yeah, I'm drinking! This is a horrible analogy, but take someone in African that is deprived of the things that should be given to them on regular basis and bring them to America, the land of milk and honey where everything is plentiful, they should do better. So, I think in my situation I came from a place that didn't have the percussive resources like most schools. Then I am suddenly in a situation where everything is available, oh, I was eating! I ate as much as I could on a daily basis. I left there fat with percussive knowledge. I think many students who go from HBCUs to PWIs get that experience. They say, "Oh, so there's more to it than this" and they eat!

Darren was always hungry for knowledge, particularly that it would inform not only as his technique and skill as a percussionist, but also as a professional career. While at KAMU, he often inquired about various music conferences, but he was discouraged from attending. But, his experiences at UP were much different. Darren explains:

My professor would always leave for four or five days in November and I never knew why. He would be like, "I'm going to this convention." So, I asked my professor could I go and he said told me no. So, when I got to UP and asked my professor about PASIC [Percussive Arts Society International Convention] he said, "Oh, you're going!" So, I went to PASIC and my mind was just blown away! I'm looking at all these famous artists and all these people who I've looked up to. I took pictures with Vic Firth! It was just crazy. I went to the performances and I was like, "People really perform like this! This is how a percussionist is supposed to perform!" To know that I was deprived of this and to know that there were people in middle school and high school and college age students were there and to hear them say, "Oh, this is like my third or fourth PASIC!" I'm 23 years old and this is the first time I'm exposed to something like this! That's a problem. That's a serious problem. I just don't know how to explain it as to why the professors are just allowing this information to go without being addressed.

UP was predominantly White, but within the school of music, it was even more evident. Summer semesters were the only time in the school of music where there were more than five African Americans in the music program. For the most part, they were band directors from HBCUs in the state. Darren was one of two African American males in the master's program; however, Darren was the only full-time African American male

in the program. There was also an African American female and she and Darren got along really well. They had to stick together to give each other support. The only African American faculty was the professor of percussion studies and a professor of ethnomusicology.

Darren was welcomed into the Phi Mu Alpha chapter as an alumni member, but he had to turn them down because he wanted to focus solely on three goals: to win the concerto competition, become a member of the honor society Phi Beta Kappa, and win outstanding graduate student of the year. By the completion of his degree, he was only able to meet one of those goals, winning the concerto competition. Although Darren was awarded an assistantship, to earn extra money to pay for his living costs he performed at least three times a week as a drumset player in addition to working at the campus bookstore.

Knowing that he wanted to continue his studies in a doctoral program, he decided to audition again at UC. This time, things were much different. Where his first audition lasted less than twenty minutes, this time it lasted for an hour. The professors were impressed that Darren spent time focusing on improving his technique. They told him that there was no way that they could have accepted him into the program the first time because he was not prepared. Darren was glad to hear that he was doing well, but at the same time he felt that his undergraduate experience had failed him because he did not receive the information he needed to be successful.

That was just another slap in the face because I'm thinking, "I know I'm talented, but if you just give me the information, then I can do well." So, that just lets me know that I really was just unprepared, not unprepared in terms of music history and theory, but percussion-wise I just was unprepared. I wasn't anything in the

repertoire that a senior level student going to become a master's student should play. My technique wasn't there. Everything was just so far behind.

After graduating with a master's in percussion performance, Darren didn't attend CU. He served as substitute teacher and a freelance drummer for a year. Today, Darren is pursuing a doctorate degree in percussion performance at the University of Kindell, a PWI. He also serves as Assistant Director of Bands at Richland A&T University, an HBCU. When asked, how did he make it, Darren replied:

First, God got me here. Second, it's the will to continue. I've known so many people who had these bright ideas, but they didn't execute. They say, "Okay, I'm about to do this and I'm about get that." With them, it's always "I'm about to." . . . I said I was going to graduate from KAMU and I did. I said I was going to get into graduate school. I did that. . . . If I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it well. I'm not going to, excuse my language, half-ass it and I'm not going to bullshit it. I'm going to do it well. If I'm going to put my name on it, it has to be done well. So, I think, by me being here (UK doctoral program), from my master's degree and moving on, whatever I choose to do has to be done with a sense of excellence and sense of "Make it happen!" That's the phrase that pays. I learned that during my undergrad experience. Make it happen! So, if say I'm going to do it, I will get it done and if I'm going to do it, it's going to be good. And when people deny me, I will get it done another way, but it will get done.

### **Chris' Graduate Experience**

Initially, Chris applied to Weaver State University and was not accepted. In addition, he started two other master's programs at two other PWIs, but was not able to complete them due to various personal issues. Chris chose to attend Tyler University (TU) because the conducting professors were well known in their field. The option to pursue a conducting degree part-time in a summer program also allowed Chris to continue a full-time job as a high school band director, while taking care of his wife and children. He also chose TU because he thought a PWI would offer him a different experience than that at an HBCU.



Chris believed that receiving a second degree from a PWI would afford him opportunities that his current degree alone or two degrees from an HBCU would not. Moreover, the only master's degree offered at an HBCU that was an option for Chris was a master's in music education, and he wanted a conducting emphasis.

To be totally honest with you, I feel like if I were to go into a particular job situation with two degrees from an HBCU, I may not get the same opportunities versus someone that may go in with two degrees from a PWI. Or even someone with a degree from a PWI and HBCU. I think with me having a degree from an HBCU and PWI shows a little bit diversity on my side. It's not to discredit anyone with degrees from an HBCU because I know quite a few educators who do. But, I guess that's something that's always been programmed in my mind.

When asked about the value of the same degree from both an HBCU versus a PWI, Chris responded:

I think it's depending on the demographic of the particular area you're trying to find a job in. For instance, when I got my degree from ESU, I was able to get a job in Mixon very quick. If I were to move to California, I would probably have a hard time. But, if I got my degree from University of Alabama (UA), everybody knows about UA. They're national football champions. I think it's dependent on multiple factors though. But, to give you a general answer, yes I think that it is a deciding factor with some people in regards to where you got your degree. For instance, in the Parris County schools, if you got your degree from PAMU you are pretty much guaranteed a job in that county. That's the elephant in the room. But, that's what it is. But, seriously, there is a big ass elephant in the room though regarding degrees from PWIs versus HBCUs!

Although Chris' family was supportive and encouraging of him pursuing a second degree, he credits his wife as being the most supportive and inspirational. One of the things Chris and his wife had to do in order for him to pursue his degree was adjust their schedules. For instance, his wife always took care of their three kids on evenings that Chris had class and when he had to study. But, there were also times when his mother-in-law also helped out with caring for their children.

Chris already knew where all of his classes were because the dean personally gave him a tour of the music facilities. Every summer was very intense because, in TU's summer master's conducting program, classes only lasted two weeks. From the first day to the last, Chris and his peers were intensely engaged in their courses daily from 8am to 5pm. There was no time to really take a break. Chris paid for his education with the exception of his last summer in the program, when he received financial aid.

Chris really enjoyed interacting with his professors and peers at TU. Particularly, the conducting professors each had at least 30 years teaching and engaging in music education, and were extremely knowledgeable. The professors also knew each student on both a professional and personal level. It wasn't out of the ordinary for any of the professors to spend time outside of class mentoring students. For instance, Dr. Drabing, one of the conducting professors, reserved an hour before classes every Monday to sit and talk with Chris on topics ranging from teaching in inner city schools to conducting traditional band pieces.

All of Chris' peers shared the common bond of being band directors.

As far as the students, we got along well. All of us are working band directors, so we could relate with each other easily. We're all in the same boat trying to get the same thing, so there was no looking down on anybody. There was no competition. We all respect each other as professionals.

Chris and a younger African American male took classes in the master's conducting program along with four White females and four White males. Although Chris was cordial with all his peers, Chris and the other African American male developed a closer relationship than others in his class.

I only had one person who I would talk to outside of class and to be honest with you it's because he's the only other Black male in the class. I spoke with him

everyday. Everyone else, I associated with through Facebook. Other than class projects, that's it. But, when we see each other in the building, we're always cordial to each other. That's just expected. . . . Most of the classes are predominantly White, but I guess for me it's not that I don't want to talk to people who are White. The Black male in the class is a little bit younger than me and we happened to know a lot of the same people. So, that's where we found our common ground. But, I guess it was comfort, too. He was a brass player and I am, too. I don't know for sure, but he may have looked up to me.

Chris is currently working to complete his master's degree in conducting from Tyler. He will complete in May 2015. He currently serves as the director of bands at an inner city high school in Corman. When asked, how was he able to make it through college and graduate school, Chris stated:

By being persistent and determined. I've wanted to work on my master's degree since undergrad. I started two other master's programs, but I just didn't finish them. But, [with] this program [at Tyler], I am determined to finish and it shows that I am persistent. I get up in the summer and drive an hour and a half to and from school everyday. Then, during the school year, I do the same thing—I drive to and from after I've finished working. Also, by having mentors and people around me with similar interests. I think that's it. But, even without those people, I'm determined to be successful. If that requires me getting a degree or going to a professional development session I will do it.

### **Denzel's Graduate Experience**

Denzel chose to pursue a master's in conducting at the University of Greenwood (UG) for various reasons. UG was relatively close to home and its music admission requirements were less stringent. UG was also where Dr. Galloway, his professor at Dawkins State University (DSU), received his doctorate in conducting. Moreover, Denzel felt that degrees from an HBCU and a PWI would contribute to a more diverse background that would later inform his teaching methods and strategies as a music educator.

Naturally, Denzel's parents were supportive of his choice to continue his education in the master's program. Denzel's mother was especially excited that he would attend UG because it was only a couple of hours away. Due to the fact that Denzel didn't have to pay for his first degree because of academic and band scholarships, his mother offered to pay half of his rent during his master's experience. Loans and a graduate teaching assistantship (GTA) in his second year covered most of Denzel's other degree expenses.

Denzel's first day of classes was very exciting. One of his most memorable experiences was learning that he made the top wind ensemble, followed by his first experience in its rehearsal. Once the conductor gave the first downbeat, the first thing that popped into Denzel's head was "Oh, my God! He's not playing! He's going the tempo that's on the paper!"

I was like, "Okay, well at least now I know. The next time I come in here, I have to have my part prepared at tempo and be flawless. Or people will be looking at you like, 'Why are you in here?'" Maybe that was the immature side of being in undergrad, but if you came in, the kids would laugh at you and joke around. But at UG, if you came in and the conductor asks your section to play and you are messing up, everybody in the section will look at you and they're won't be laughing. They're going to look at you like, "You need to get your stuff together. You're messing us up." So, the expectation was higher and the margin for error was lower. They're not going to curse you out or anything like that, but he will look at and say, "You need to practice." It's not mean, but it wasn't nice. It's kind of like calling you out. That was one of the biggest eye-opening experiences there.

UG was predominantly White, especially in the school of music and there was only one professor that was African American. According to Denzel, although there were five African Americans in the school of music, he was the only full-time African American graduate student and the only African American in all his classes.

During his first semester at UG, Denzel always went to his apartment following classes to do all of the assignments his professors assigned that day. Most of the time, he remained in his apartment after completing his assignments to hangout and watch TV, largely because he really didn't know anyone and there wasn't much to do in Jasper. However, all of the members in UG's Phi Mu Alpha (PMA) chapter were very excited to meet Denzel and happy to support him. They were elated that he was also a GTA who was also a Sinfonian. Unfortunately, Denzel wasn't able to attend all of their meetings and activities due to the workload of his degree.

Undergraduates found Denzel to be friendly and approachable. They often asked him about some things in music education, specifically regarding teaching in various environments. As he talked with students, he found the music education department's placement of student teachers problematic.

I noticed that they would send the student teachers to certain schools and not others. I always wondered about that, but I didn't want to get into because I was just there to get my degree. I noticed that the students didn't go to predominantly Black schools and schools who had traditional bands. So, I didn't want to get into that with them so I was like, "I'd better not ask." But, it's just interesting in how some schools and experiences are left out. It's unfair.

Denzel offered his perspective to students who asked for advice about student teaching placements.

I will tell them to check out the schools that no one is going to because that's where you're going to have the most impact for yourself and the students. It's the schools that don't have someone taking interest in them that you should look into. I would tell them that we all hope to get a nice plush job at a school, but what are you going to do when there is only five people in the band without any money or other resources and you are going to have to build that program up? You have to expect the unexpected. I told them, the probability of you getting a plush job is not very high. You're going to get reality.

During Denzel's first semester at UG, he wasn't a graduate teaching assistant, but he made sure that he attended every rehearsal including the wind and symphonic winds ensemble as well as those of the marching and jazz bands. Denzel enjoyed learning from watching others teach and he often took notes of all his observations on his iPad. Mr. Myers, the associate band director emailed Denzel telling him because of work ethic he would be eligible for an assistantship and asking him why he didn't apply. Denzel hadn't realized that he could and after meeting with Mr. Myers, he was offered a GTA the following year which he humbly accepted.

Over the Christmas break of Denzel's first semester at UG he received an another email from Mr. Myers informing him that he and two GTAs that they would be responsible for the concert band's rehearsals and performances in the spring semester. With excitement, Denzel reached out to the two GTAs, who were White, to organize and plan for the spring semester, but he did not receive a response from them.

Upon spring semester starting, the two GTAs consistently planned rehearsals and copied scores for themselves without including Denzel. Denzel felt this made him appear as though he had no idea of what was going on in front of the concert band students—that wasn't the case. After realizing what was going on, Denzel purchased his own scores to make sure that he was prepared no matter what happened. Denzel found out from his friends that the GTAs were envious of him and upset that he was chosen over other individuals who were there longer than Denzel who were also GTAs.

So, when we had the first rehearsal, they were like, "Well, what pieces would you like to play?" I was like, "Dude, I emailed you back in December." It was always a bit awkward though. But, I always thought they were shady. Maybe it's because they didn't know me, but part of it was because I was Black and I was being successful. I was getting my work done and getting A's.

Another instance of oppositional behavior from Denzel's peers took place in a music education research class. The class was an introductory class, but it emphasized scholarly writing. Denzel and his peers had to turn in a written assignment, but instead of the professor returning the papers back to the students, she suggested that students meet her individually so that could review their writing. When it was Denzel's time to meet with the professor, he was very nervous about not doing well, or worse, failing. Denzel asked, "What did I do wrong?" The professor turned to him with a smile stating, "I have two suggestions about how you could possibly restate a sentence, but that's an opinion. If you don't mind, I'm going to use your paper. I will take your name off of it. I will use your paper as an example." That gave Denzel great relief. The following day the professor returned all of the student's papers, except Denzel's and another student's. That evening in their study group, Denzel's peers, including the two band GTAs, asked him why he didn't get his paper back. Playing into the professor's initial plan, Denzel informed them that he had no idea of how he did and that he was sure that he didn't do well.

I remember one of them came to me in the study group and he said, "Are trying to make us look bad?" I was like, "What do you mean?" He was like, "Well, you always turn in your assignments early and she never gives you back any of your writing assignments. Are you trying to make us look bad?" He laughed, but he was for real. You know when people laugh? They really mean it. They are just trying to take the edge off. But, I said, "No. I don't know any of you well enough to do that. Secondly, I want to turn in my things ahead of time because I want my holiday breaks when they come around." But, I knew what they were thinking. White people are very competitive, even if you don't know them. But, they are like that. And that's fine. I'm not that way. But, because I wasn't a GTA they would ask me where I was from, whom I studied with and what did I do and so on. They would ask questions about what I did before I got there because I wasn't a GTA [during my first year there].

Even in rehearsals, Denzel felt that people always stared at him with a “crazy look” on their faces as if he didn’t belong. Despite such oppositional behavior, Denzel continued to do his very best to gain as much knowledge as he could.

In my mind, I always thought that in music it didn't matter if you were Black or White, everyone could sit down and enjoy a piece of music and talk about it. And not having to worry about people judging you and talking about you, you could just enjoy it. I never thought that going into situations like that, you have to think of people doing stuff like that to you or treating you like that and they don't even know you. That's the thing that would kill me. They're just so competitive, thinking that I'm coming to take what they have. But, if you think about it, there is something out there for everyone. All you have to do is work for it.

After receiving his master’s degree, Denzel served as a band director of an inner city middle school in Corman for three years. He will start Basic Combat Training (BCT) this coming September, followed by Advanced Initial Training (AIT) at the U.S. Armed Forces School of Music in Norfolk, Virginia. He hopes to be assigned in one of the U.S. Army active duty bands as a bassoonist. When I asked how did he made it through both undergraduate and graduate experiences, he stated:

I made it by stepping out on faith and trying it, even if I didn't think I would make it. I had to make sure that I was going after my dreams; even if other people said I shouldn't do it. . . . I knew that it wasn't going to be easy.

### **Morgan’s Graduate Experience**

Morgan chose to attend Galkin State University (GSU) in Keileen because of its reputation of being one of the best music schools in the country and it was located in the same city that his parents were going to move to following his father’s military enlistment with the U.S. Marine Corps in another state. Morgan also wanted to experience an environment different than that of his undergraduate experience.



Morgan's family was very supportive of him pursuing his educational and career goals. While Morgan's degree was largely focused on music education research and performance, his family still found ways to support him. For instance, some of his family attended step shows that his fraternity participated in. Instead of having to go through the trouble of looking for a place to live while pursuing his master's degree, Morgan's uncle allowed Morgan to live with him in Keileen.

Of the classes that Morgan attended, the majority of them were typically small. However, Morgan noticed almost immediately that GSU was much different than his Hillman State University (HSU), excluding the obvious observations like size of student and faculty population. Prior to attending GSU, Morgan really didn't know that research was a serious component of music education. He also noticed that where he only had to provide an answer to questions presented by his professors at HSU, professors at GSU asked him to think more critically about his answers. Nonetheless, Morgan was determined to figure out a way to be successful despite differences.

The level of discussion and how the people in the class thought, it kind of made that standard. There were some very smart people in those classes who are doing research even then. So, I had to figure out how to get there, in the class. Assimilation. I had to make sure that I was doing things to a point to where they were at an acceptable level. At the time, I didn't know what was going on or I just didn't understand it at the level other people did. I had that in the back of my mind, "I am the only person that look like me in, I need to set a good example" even though I didn't know what was going on. For all of my graduate classes, I was the only African American. But, in a music technology course, I was not. It was a mix with senior undergraduates. I had that mindset—they would have to kick me out because I wasn't going to quit. I would never tell anybody here this, but I was the only African American in the class and I didn't want to go in there and be the "typical Black person" who doesn't put forth great effort or who doesn't work hard. I may not have understood what was going on, but I was going to bug the teacher to death until I would get it and I did.

Morgan's professors admired the fact that Morgan wanted to be successful and that he was diligent about gaining access to the information he did not know in efforts to be successful. Although Morgan was the only African American in all his classes, he expected it.

If I were to say that I was shocked and surprised, I would be lying. I knew that going to GSU, I expected that. That's probably one of the things that I embraced. I kind of made my own thing because I am one of the firsts to go into music education. I kind of expected that. If I would have seen more than one, I would have been shocked. I expected that. It's GSU. It's a PWI!

Morgan was very involved in his fraternity's graduate chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha in Keileen. He held various officer positions as well, chairing several committees. Often his line brothers drove to Keileen to support him and the graduate chapter's events. Their support provided Morgan familiar faces and personalities with which he could spend time with outside of class. Morgan's involvement with the graduate chapter allowed him to also meet and network with other individuals on campus who were also African American.

Although Morgan received a minority scholarship to attend GSU, it only covered tuition. To help make up for the difference of his expenses, Morgan worked. At one point, he had three jobs. He worked at Marshall's clothing store, the university's bookstore, and he was a tutor for the athletic department. Eventually, he only worked as a tutor for the athletic department and at Marshall's. Despite the stress of working several jobs and being a full-time student, Morgan's philosophy was, "You got to do what you have to!" He firmly believed that in order to provide for himself and possibly a future family, he had to work hard.

After earning a master's degree in music education from GSU, Morgan taught high school band for four years. He was also married two years following the completion of his master's. Currently, Morgan is in his second year of pursuing a Ph.D. in music education at GSU. Morgan was determined to do well in school. He states, "I had that mindset; they would have to kick me out because I wasn't going to quit. . . . I'm not the smartest, but I work just as hard as anyone else, if not harder."

### **Johnathan's Graduate Experience**

Johnathan had a deep interest to learn all the things he wasn't able to learn at Stenton Tech University (STU) either due to a lack of resources or faculty members specializing in the jazz and saxophone studies. Johnathan chose to attend STU because it was located in a bigger city than that of his undergraduate experience and a jazz professor from another PWI recommended it to him.

Johnathan's parents were thrilled to know that their son would continue his education in the master's program at STU. Unfortunately, they were unable to attend all Johnathan's performances because the U.S. Coast Guard stationed his father in Virginia, placing his family further away from him. Johnathan and his father were very close. His father was willing to support Johnathan in order for him to be able to achieve all of his dreams and goals. Whatever Johnathan needed, his father made sure he had it. Although his parents were proud of their son, Johnathan felt as though getting an education was something that all people should aspire to do—it's what you're supposed to do. He also believed that it was responsibility to pay for college. Unfortunately, Johnathan was not awarded a scholarship to attend STU. But, with the help of tuition assistance and the GI Bill as well as loans, Johnathan was able to fund his own education.

Johnathan's first day of classes was definitely a surprise because he had quite a few preconceived thoughts about PWIs in comparison to HBCUs as well as how others perceived both institutions.

There was really no difference. I was expecting a lot more to be different. When I walked into the classroom, I expected people to be sitting down in corners talking about philosophy and life. I expected TV reenactments of college life where the students would be wearing ascots. They called it a White school, so that's what I was expecting. That was the vision in my head. The level of knowledge was true. They were very smart people, but they were just people who were average. I didn't expect to be able to blend in as well as I did. . . . I expected it to be like, "Oh, you don't know this," because continually and time and time again people say, "Yeah, you go to an HBCU school." Apparently, the caliber of information or knowledge you are supposed to know is supposed to be lower. Those are things that I've heard time and time again. "Oh, an HBCU. If you can't graduate from there ... " That's what I was expecting from those types of schools. I was expecting to be behind in everything. But, in reality, I was one of the few students answering questions and raising my hands. Maybe that was because I wanted to impress my counterpart.

Johnathan was very excited to be in class on his first day, especially in jazz band. Actually, he was the only one that was excited. The other students were sort of on autopilot. Either way, Johnathan was ready to play. Once the band hit the downbeat, he realized that he really needed to visit the practice room. While Johnathan was struggling to keep up, other students were simply sight-reading. Many of the students came from respectable other jazz programs such the University of North Texas, the University of Indiana, and the University of Kentucky.

For the most part, STU's student and faculty population was predominantly White. For Johnathan, it really blew his mind when he found that many of the professors were not international. Most of the students were male. Johnathan was one of three African Americans in the graduate music program at STU. Johnathan also expected there to be more African American professors, especially in the jazz department. But, they

were all White. Finding students to hangout with was a bit of a task. At STU, students tended to prescribe to certain cliques. One of the most noticeable yet distracting observations Johnathan saw was that fact that music was perceived to be more academic and less creative at STU than at SAMU.

Besides the fact that Johnathan's peers in his saxophone studio played saxophone, there really weren't any other commonalities between them. Most of them were approximately twenty years older than him and some of them were also married with kids. Of the relationships Johnathan had with his professors at STU, he appreciated his relationship with his jazz professor most because like his professors at SAMU, he was honest with Johnathan about his skillset and where he should focus his efforts and time. Outside of his relationship with his jazz professor, Johnathan simply did his work and got his grade. That was it.

Although Johnathan was a member of two Greek organizations, Nu Rho Sigma and Alpha Phi Alpha, he wasn't able to participate at STU in them due to his coursework load and other obligations like the military. Johnathan really didn't feel appreciated at STU for the things he offered. To find balance or a social outlet, Johnathan played in an R&B combo and at a local church. These outlets provided Johnathan the opportunity to be creative and the freedom to explore music the way he wanted to. Although Johnathan admits that he became a better saxophone player, if he had to do it all over again, he would not chose to attend STU.

Presently, Johnathan serves as a band director in an inner city middle school in Dolley. He is also an active National Guardsman in the state National Guard in Dolley.

## CHAPTER 6

### ANALYSIS OF PERSEVERANCE

Chapter Six examines participants' perceptions of their own degree perseverance in transitioning from an HBCU to a PWI. Using Duckworth's Grit model (2009), I discuss participants' Grit scores in relation to their college experiences. More specifically, I illuminate those experiences that either challenged participants' perseverance or facilitated their forming of Grit. In addition, I discuss how other forms of perseverance outside of Duckworth's model assisted in participants' degree completion. Last, I offer assessments of Duckworth's Grit model in efforts to better understand how Grit is manifested, interpreted, and employed.

#### Grit

Duckworth defines Grit as “a personality trait of perseverance and passion toward a long-term goal despite failure, adversity, plateaus in progress, and lack of positive feedback” (Duckworth et al., 2007, p. 1087). For this study, I asked the eight participants to respond to Duckworth's Grit-S Scale, a Likert-type scale consisting of eight items (Duckworth et al., 2007; see Figure 9 below). For items 2, 4, 7, and 8, Duckworth et. al assigned the following points: 5 = Very much like me; 4 = Mostly like me; 3 = Somewhat like me; 2 = Nothing like me; and 1 = Not like me at all. For items 1, 3, 5, and 6, the following points were assigned in reverse order: 1 = Very much like me; 2 = Mostly like me; 3 = Somewhat like me; 4 = Not much like me; and 5 = Not like me at all. Grit scores are calculated by adding the value of each item, then dividing the sum by 8. Scores range from 5 = extremely gritty to 1 = not gritty at all. Items 1, 3, 5, and 6 underline how participants assess their *interest* towards completing goals and projects despite time and

adversity. In contrast, items 2, 4, 7, and 8 emphasize participants' perceptions of their *efforts* toward completing goals and their work ethic, despite adversity, failure, and prolonged time.

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New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.

Setbacks don't discourage me.

I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.

I am a hard worker.

I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.

I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.

I finish whatever I begin.

I am diligent.

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Figure 9. Grit-S Scale, by Duckworth & Quinn (2009). *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 91(2).

Below, Figure 2 illustrates the participants' Grit Scores. Darren and Chris, scoring 4.5 out of a 5 point-scale, appear to be the "grittiest" participants. Karl and Nathan scored the second highest, with 4.375. Denzel and Johnathan had the third highest score with 3.75 and Michael scored 3.625. Morgan scored the lowest on the Grit scale with 3.5.

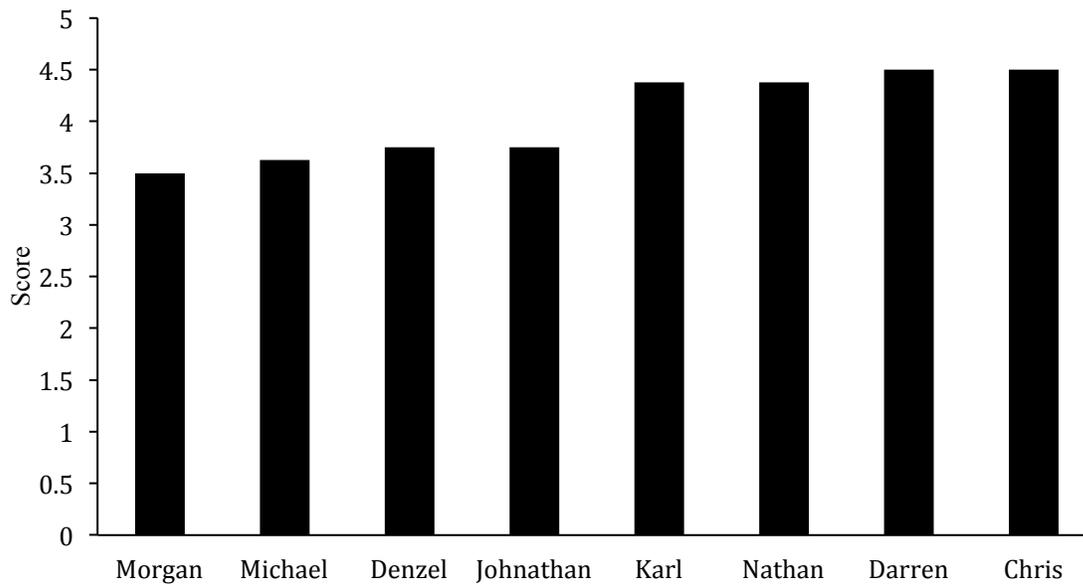


Figure 10. Participants' Grit Scores

The mean Grit score for all participants was 4.03, suggesting all of them to be “very gritty.” Only a one-point difference existed between Darren and Chris’ scores suggesting them to be the grittiest, and Morgan and Michael, the least gritty. To further understand the differentiation among participants’ Grit scores, as described in Chapter Three, I analyzed participants’ responses by pairing each participant with another participant whose score was either identical or similar to theirs, and then comparing their responses on each item with examples from my interview data; this analysis showed their Grittiness to be far more similar than illustrated in Figure 2.

Based on participants’ encounters with and responses to adverse experiences, these relatively high and close scores were not surprising to me. Data suggest that despite their individual difficulties, setbacks, elongated projects, and distractions, all participants saw themselves as hard working, diligent, and committed to completing their goals.



Excluding a supportive school culture, Duckworth does not discuss the sources from which Grit may be accessed. As Chapters Four and Five suggest, participants' Grit might have been developed through their observance of others early on in their lives, their own experiences, and their access to capital, particularly community cultural wealth. Those chapters also illustrate how participants' Grit was challenged and how multiple spaces (e.g., school, church, home environments) and individuals (e.g., parents, teachers, peers, school counselors) within those spaces may have contributed to their Grittiness. In the sections that follow, I discuss in detail how participants may have become Gritty and how their Grittiness was tested by encounters prior to and during their undergraduate and graduate experiences. I also examine participants' perseverance as it relates to their individual Grit scores and access to capital.

### **Forming and Challenging Participants' Grittiness**

#### **Pre-college Experiences**

While all participants in this study developed their Grit according to their own unique experiences, participants also witnessed key individuals, particularly their parents, persevering in the face of adversity such as financial hardships, racism, and inequity. Some participants shared that much of their parents' motivation was fueled by being able to provide for their family and also situating their children in a position that would allow them do to better than their parents.

Some parents stressed that obtaining an education was vital. For instance, Denzel and Karl's parents, particularly their mothers, were adamant about their sons receiving the best education. After Denzel was denied entrance into one of the premiere middle schools in his suburban community, his mother worked hard to get him enrolled into

another academically robust school in the city. As a result, Denzel not only received a good education, but he was afforded the opportunity to travel abroad and interact with others who did not share similar racial, cultural, and social backgrounds. Denzel also accompanied his mother on long drives to some of her night classes for her master's degree, watching her engage in classroom discussions while doing his homework.

Karl's mother actively sought out a number of educational opportunities for Karl and his sister, making sure that they were not influenced by individuals and ideals that would prohibit them from being successful—even if it meant confining them to the dining room table to engage in five variations of Scrabble. Like Denzel, he accompanied his mother to her theater rehearsals at one of the local universities, and he witnessed his mother's passion and hard work towards something she enjoyed.

Morgan's father decided to drop out of school to enlist into the military to provide immediate financial support for his growing family, after learning that his future wife, who was then a sophomore in college, was pregnant with Morgan. He did so knowing that he was only a year away from receiving his college degree. Although Morgan's mother had to take maternity leave from school, she later transferred to a school closer to home, to take care of Morgan and complete her degree. All throughout Morgan's childhood and adolescent years, Morgan observed his mother and father making sacrifices to provide the best supportive environment for him. Today, alongside her son, Morgan's mother is also completing her doctorate.

Unlike other participants of this study, Michael's and Chris' fathers were not supportive of them going to college. Michael's father scorned him because he insisted on going to college, refusing his father's desire for him to enlist into the military. Chris'

father reprimanded him for declining to work alongside him in his construction business. Despite their fathers' negative attitudes towards their aspirations, Michael and Chris disregarded their fathers and went away to college.

Karl was the only participant who stated that larger scale historic events influenced his perseverance. He grew up during a time when African Americans were denied access, not only to PWIs, but also to certain restaurants and other public establishments. Karl was born in 1963, just five years before Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated and the release of James Brown's "Say It Loud—I'm Black And I'm Proud" tune. For Karl, it was not out of the norm to turn on the television and see people protesting against racial discrimination and inequality. Along with Dr. King's non-violent approach, Karl was also very aware of other approaches to achieve equality, such as the Black Panthers and the Black Liberation Army.

In addition to observing others pursue their goals despite failure and oppositional behavior, participants experienced adversity of their own that in turn might have assisted them in becoming Gritty. One of Johnathan's White elementary teachers treated him and other African American students differently than his White peers. Although Johnathan did not fully understand his teacher's actions, he cataloged that experience as an intrinsic motivator to prove her, and others who perceived him as inadequate, wrong. Similar to Johnathan, Michael's first White middle band director treated him harshly in front of the class by calling him Jell-O Jaws. Michael assumed that his teacher believed that he and other African Americans students were lesser than those who were White. Michael used his encounter as means to not only prove his teacher wrong, but also as a motivator to be the very best bass clarinet player in his school district during his middle school and high

school experiences. On the other hand, Darren was arrested during his senior year in high school for taking items from his job for himself and his friends. While in jail, his cellmate demanded that he turn his life around and go to school. His cellmate illustrated to Darren that if he didn't straighten up, he would end up like him—a frequent occupant of the penal system.

### **College Experiences**

Participants found ways to soak up as much knowledge and skill as they possibly could. Darren sought every opportunity to ask questions of his percussion professor, and Denzel attended every rehearsal, including marching band, concert band, jazz band, and orchestra, even though he only participated in one of three of the concert bands. As a result of Darren's persistence, he became the first African American to win the concerto competition at UP. Johnathan and Karl sought out additional opportunities to perform in the communities surrounding the institution. Morgan discovered that he was behind many of his peers in his research classes at GSU, largely because he did not understand or possess much of the language used during discussion. He refused to be the only student in his class who did not grasp research concepts, and sought out the help of his professors. Morgan was intent on being successful. He stated, "I had that mindset. They would have to kick me out because I wasn't going to quit. . . . I'm not the smartest, but I work just as hard as anyone else, if not harder."

All participants of this study attended freshmen band camp. They had to learn how to march and play, based on the demands of their respective program. Participants stated that band camp was very difficult to negotiate. Chris, Morgan, and Johnathan compared their experience to that of a new recruit in basic training. They had early

mornings, endured intensive physical training, and were often yelled at by the upperclassmen. Enrollment in the marching band<sup>9</sup> class automatically meant each participant was a member of the marching band. However, in order to be accepted into the band by the student body, new members had to undergo a pledging process that was accompanied by hazing, which included, but was not limited to physical and mental exhaustion and getting paddled. Denzel and Johnathan were the only participants who refused to endure the pledging process. For the most part, they attended rehearsals and participated in performances. Despite their level of musicianship and hard work, however, their band mates considered them outcasts who did not truly belong. Along with other band members who did not pledge the band, they were not permitted inside of any of the social circles in the band. Whether or not each participant was viewed as a full member of the band, all of them encountered some form of adversity during their undergraduate marching band experience.

Karl, Nathan, Darren, and Johnathan all pledged at least two fraternities, while Michael, Morgan, and Denzel pledged one fraternity. Chris was the only participant who was not a member of a Greek social or musical organization. Although some participants stated that they experienced hazing, others did not tell me about such requirements from their fraternities. Similar to their marching band experience, some participants were required to attend late night meetings that sometimes lasted until the following morning, in addition to their coursework load.

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<sup>9</sup> Throughout the discussion chapters, the phrase “the band” refers exclusively to the marching band.

## **Discussion: Means of Persistence**

With Grit scores ranging from 3.5 to 4.5 and an overall score of 4.0, participants' Grit scores revealed all of them to be "Very Gritty." As data suggest, all participants encountered some challenges during their HBCU and PWI experience. Despite adversity, failure, lack of positive feedback, and plateaus in their progress (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009), all participants were able to successfully navigate through two very distinct environments. I estimate that anyone would have given up on their goals after enduring some of the experiences that participants encountered early on in their lives. However, all of them persevered through their obstacles. I believe that most participants were able to meet their obstacles head on because they acquired knowledge and skills of persistence by observing key individuals in their families and other circles. They recognized that they could actively change their circumstances, and they perceived their struggles as a temporary pause on their way to success. In the sections that follow, I discuss how Grit, Growth Mindset, community cultural wealth, double consciousness, and religion contributed to participants' forming of Grit and how they employed these means of persistence to negotiate their transition.

### **Grit**

I analyzed participants' academic, cultural, social, and racial experiences. From an academic perspective, participants encountered specific adverse components of their undergraduate and graduate experiences that challenged their perseverance. For instance, some participants of this study encountered academic difficulties after transitioning into a PWI from their respective HBCU. Karl, Darren, Denzel, and Johnathan discovered that they lacked technique and other essential performance skills, and felt they had to play

“catch up” after their first rehearsal. While they were disappointed, they did not allow their deficiencies to prohibit them from succeeding.

In comparison with their respective music programs at PWIs, participants did not have access to similar resources at their HBCUs, including a number of quality facilities and equipment, professors per area, and instant access to financial aid. Most participants were not aware that these differences existed until they transitioned from their HBCUs. I believe that if their transition had been in reverse, transitioning from an undergraduate music program at a PWI to that of a graduate program at a HBCU, some of their academic experiences would have been more frustrating. However, because their transition was the other way around, they appreciated their access to the resources they did not have at their individual HBCUs. I contend that their appreciation and the experience of not having motivated them to take advantage of all their PWIs had to offer.

In comparison with academic difficulties, participants encountered multiple cultural, social, and academic obstacles at their respective HBCUs and PWIs. While the marching band and Greek organizations were both very difficult groups to gain membership in, most participants were, in some ways, willing to undergo the pledging process for both because they possessed a great desire to be a part of those groups. Every participant was fixated on becoming a performing member of the marching band at an HBCU, despite the adversity they would have to overcome to be a member. All of them had to endure marching band camp. There were two levels of membership, ‘paper’ and ‘official,’ from which students had to choose. According to most participants of this study, in order to become an official member, an individual would have to undergo the pledging process, which often included hazing. Denzel and Johnathan, along with some

of their band peers who chose not to pledge, were treated as outcasts and referred to as 'paper.'

All participants of this study experienced being one of the few or the only African American in all of their graduate classes. This experience presented some uncomfortable, but also empowering moments for participants. For instance, Morgan used his position as a minority at GSU to represent African Americans in a positive light by working hard and seizing every opportunity to obtain new knowledge by asking questions, attending conferences, and engaging in learning opportunities abroad. On the other hand, sometimes Michael had to explain or defend Black culture to his peers and professor, whose perceptions of inner city Blacks pigeonholed all of them into criminals and thieves. Morgan's and Michael's approaches to these particular adverse experiences were different; however, both persevered despite being a minority within a majority.

I believe that while participants had their own ways of confronting their challenges, I also understand that, in some situations, they may not have had many options but to deal with perceived racism on their own. In order to push through, Johnathan, Michael, and Denzel had to manage their struggles at their PWIs on their own. Denzel didn't know how to explain to his professors that he felt ignored and left out by his White peers in what many perceive as a post-racial era, while Johnathan and Michael felt that there was no one among their peers and professors with whom they could talk to about their experiences of racism. However, Karl was, in some ways, more overt with his frustration with the racism he experienced, sort of wearing his emotions on his sleeve. To assert his Blackness and disapproval toward Whiteness and opposition, he wore an Africa medallion, formed an all-Black graduate social group and named it the Black caucus, and



also traveled to a nearby HBCU to hangout with his fellow fraternity brothers. In contrast, because Morgan felt comfortable with his professors, he was able to approach them to discuss some of the academic difficulties he was having in his research classes.

From financial hardships to academic deficiencies, to issues of race and blatant racism, participants' Grit was put to the test. However, although participants encountered similar experiences within a shared phenomenon, each constructed their own individual perceptions of and responses to adversity. As participants moved into educational settings in higher education, they encountered situations that challenged their Grit and in return, those situations contributed to the Grit they already possessed. While much of the adversity experienced by participants occurred during their PWI experience, HBCUs were not found without their own challenges.

### **Growth Mindset**

Despite experiencing oppositional attitudes and behaviors, participants perceived themselves as “masters of their own fate.”<sup>10</sup> They understood that they were the primary stakeholders in their own lives. Carol Dweck (2006), a professor of psychology at Stanford University, refers to this particular attitude toward adversity as “Growth Mindset.” Those with a growth mindset not only believe that they can change their circumstances, but they embrace challenges, learn from criticism, and discover lessons through others' successes and failures. They thrive on growth. For them, failure is a temporary pause on their way to greatness. On the other hand, those whose outlook is complacent possess a “fixed” mindset. They do not inspire easily. Instead, they are

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<sup>10</sup> William Ernest Henley's poem titled *Invictus*

threatened by the success of others, they give up easily, and perceive difficult situations, particularly failure, as permanent. At the time I am writing this paper, Duckworth is investigating Dweck's Growth Mindset Theory in efforts to uncover more clues toward accessing achievement and success.<sup>11</sup>

### **Community Cultural Wealth**

Stemming from several sources including parents, teachers, and community members, participants in this study acquired knowledge about how to navigate various spaces in higher education. Yosso (2005) refers to this collection of information acquired from various sources as community cultural wealth. She asserts that Bourdieu's framing of cultural capital is limited in that it does not consider the value of other forms of cultural capital possessed by subordinate groups. For people of color, accessing dominant capital is similar to piecing together a quilt, with each piece originating from a different source. These pieces may include aspirational capital, familial capital, linguistic capital, navigational capital, resistant capital, and social capital. Although not all participants of this study acquired dominant capital from immediate sources such as their parents, they all possessed community cultural wealth. Participants' access to cultural capital, despite its source, afforded them some security in knowing that they possessed some cognitive and social maps of institutions of higher education. In turn, their knowing contributed to their perseverance.

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[http://www.ted.com/talks/angela\\_lee\\_duckworth\\_the\\_key\\_to\\_success\\_grit?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit?language=en)

*Resistance capital.* Within Yosso's community cultural wealth theory, resistant capital is defined as knowledge and skills formed through oppositional behaviors that challenge inequality and subordination. Michael stated that he and his family regularly encountered racist attitudes and behaviors of Whites. As the only Black Boy Scout in his predominantly White Troop, those Boy Scouts who were White often mistreated him by refusing to speak to him and also by making hurtful statements. Then, Michael's first middle school band director who was also White embarrassed him in front of the class by calling him names like "Jell-O Jaws." These and other experiences provided Michael the resistant capital that he later employed to confront racial attitudes in predominantly White communities that surrounded his HBCU and those he encountered during his graduate PWI experience. While the encounters of pre-college oppositional behavior and inequality were difficult to navigate, all participants were able to counteract racial struggles during their college experiences because of the navigational and resistant capital they possessed.

*Linguistic capital.* According to Bourdieu (1993), culture comprises both codes and meanings that equip an individual with understanding towards interpreting cultural relations and artifacts. Yosso (2005) refers to this type of capital as linguistic capital, the ability to converse in more than one language or style of communication. Participants in this study acquired the linguistic codes of African American culture from their family, community, and other social agents from within the Black community. In addition, participants acquired linguistic codes of a White dominant culture from multiple networks within and outside of their family. Both sets of codes, when acquired, allow African Americans to maneuver through predominantly Black and White spaces.

*Navigational capital.* Yosso defines navigational capital as a compilation of skills acquired over time and employed to navigate social institutions. Among participants in this study, navigational and linguistic capital functioned similarly. I contend that each set of codes is situational, meaning that they are used to navigate specific spaces. Participants were able to easily converse with other African Americans on campus due to their fluency with African American linguistic codes. Prudence Carter (2006) refers to those who possess ability to move between two distinct cultures as *cultural straddlers*. Some people would refer to this ability as *code switching*. For example, Karl was able to converse with Whites during his graduate experience and also communicate with other African Americans possessing similar linguistic codes reflective of their neighborhoods. I assert that participants in this study were adept cultural straddlers, which in turn contributed to both their confidence and perseverance. Whites, however, often are not required to acquire codes of other cultures, including linguistic codes, due to the fact that most structures in society and education have been constructed using cultural codes reflective of a White or Euroamerican culture.

*Aspirational capital.* Yosso (2005) defines aspirational capital as the ability to dream and hope for a future goal. I found this definition of aspirational capital to align with Duckworth's Grit and Dweck's Growth Mindset Theory. As discussed above in the sections on Grit and Growth Mindset Theory, data suggest that participants in this study persisted because they were committed to the future goal of earning a master's degree, therefore, they all possessed aspirational capital.

## **Double Consciousness**

As I discussed in Chapter Two, Du Bois' (1903/2003) double consciousness theory described Blacks' awareness of a society constructed on racial binaries. In Karl's sharing of his graduate experiences, he included, "I remember someone saying that when you are an African American in America, you grow up at the very least bi-cultural." Karl was referring to how much of White culture has become African Americans' second culture due to the fact that White culture is the dominant framework for what he knows as "the norm" in society and education.

Similar to other cultural codes and meanings, double consciousness is passed on from one person to the next. Du Bois asserts that this is a unique awareness that is exclusive to African Americans—not because they have chosen this position, but as a reaction to their experience of inequity. For some of the participants of this study, I found that, while they navigated and resisted oppositional behaviors within the unfamiliar environment of PWIs, they were very attuned to the behaviors and social structures they encountered, largely due to their experiences prior to college. For instance, Karl and Michael encountered issues of race and racism as young boys, increasing their awareness of double consciousness. Both were able to use their awareness to negotiate their experiences in predominantly White spaces. Similar to forms of cultural capital and community cultural wealth, double consciousness is passed down through families and communities. I assert that it contributes to both navigational and resistant capital. Despite lacking specific cognitive and experiential maps that could have made their transitional experiences smoother, these forms of capital helped participants of this study navigate

obstacles and difficulties familiar to African Americans and, in a sense, permit them access to becoming recipients of a degree at an HBCU and PWI, respectively.

## **Religion**

Data suggest that religion contributed to participants' perseverance and the success of their transition from an HBCU to a PWI. All of the participants were exposed to Christian-based beliefs and ideals early in their lives and also participated in church services at least occasionally; however, some did not continue attending church while in college. Whether they remained active in church or not, all participants acknowledged that their continued faith in God played an important role in their ability to persevere through the processes of earning both of their degrees and in their lives. When I asked the question, "How did you make it?" some participants framed their perseverance through their religious ideals and beliefs. Darren states:

Number one, I'm blessed and highly favored. Just the fact that I spoke this and it actually happened, . . . I think talent is something that God gives you and skill is your ability to work on what you have. I've made mistakes and there were times when I didn't practice, but I got here because God wanted me to be here.

Chris also adds:

With me being raised in the church, it would be stupid to not acknowledge God and acknowledge the path he has set for me in my life. So, especially if I got into a pickle about stuff, I would definitely pray. I would say, "Lord if you help me get through this, I won't do such and such again." Honestly, I think the path that I have taken has been the path that God designed for me because the things I've learned have almost been by chance. I don't know. I kind of feel like some of the stuff that happened, as far as my education goes, was kind of like God saying, "This is for you."

In regards to his relationship with God and his rationale for his success, Morgan shares:

[It was through] the grace of God, hard work, and my family . . . I'm just blessed. If you were to go where I was born in Xavier on the roughest street in the whole area and then look at all of the opportunities that I have had . . . I've traveled

abroad to South America and Ireland, conferences and other things. I'm just a person who was born in Xavier. I'm here and I'm being blessed with the opportunities that I probably wouldn't have.

I believe that the Black church supports many African Americans in excelling in their studies, careers, and personal lives. It has certainly played a role in my own lived experiences and encounters with adversity.

### **Discussion and Summary**

Duckworth studied Grit in a number of educational settings including KIPP, the officer candidates at the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, and Scripps National Spelling Bee. Strayhorn (2013) investigated Grit among African American males at a large public research PWI. These studies revealed participants' Grit to be a predictor of success and retention towards completion of tasks and goals. Because my study relied primarily on qualitative data, I found participants' scores to simply confirm their already established perceptions of their own perseverance. They knew that they were gritty. As I revealed in Chapters One and Two, persistence and the ability to negotiate immediate obstacles in hopes of accessing future goals has been an essential piece as to how African Americans have and continue to defy the status quo, and social, cultural, and racial injustices. Duckworth's and Dweck's theories focus on ways to increase one's capacity to push past adversity and to access their goals. I contend that although their concepts may be foreign to most African Americans, the experiences that they interpret are not.

My analysis of participants' Grit scores revealed that participants' experiences, prior to and during college, helped shape their persistence toward long-term goals by capitalizing on their Grit. I did not identify participants' perceptions of their own perseverance through Duckworth's Grit model; I discovered it through their sharing of

their experiences and a mutual understanding of cultural, social, and racial realities between participants and myself. I am not sure that Duckworth's model accounts for these factors. Data in this study show that only a one-point difference separated the "least gritty" from those who were "very gritty." Overall, data revealed all participants' to be "very gritty." Based on participants' portraits and their Grit scores, and Duckworth's interpretation of Grit, I contend that my use of her Grit Scale did not contribute any additional data to this study. However, other means of persistence including Growth Mindset, community cultural wealth, double consciousness, and religion appeared to have contributed to participants' Grittiness. In addition, participants' employed community cultural wealth and double consciousness as both capital and perseverance.

Through my analysis and comparing participants' Grit scores in pairs, as outlined in Chapter Three, I was also able to peel back the layers of each participant's experience to discover that, despite identical scores, participants' perceptions of adversity and their responses to adversity differed. While my findings may have been coincidental, data illuminated other contributors to Grit including community cultural wealth, double consciousness, and religion. Large scale studies like Duckworth's certainly bring to light findings that can not be obtained through the use of qualitative data; however, specific tangible experiences such as those illustrated in this study will help infuse quantitative studies with rich data. By having access to the participants' experiences and others like them, occupants of the dominant culture may be afforded the opportunity to see themselves through the accounts of others and how they may contribute to or prevent the success of others. In essence, we should consider "peeling back the onion" one layer at a time to gain greater visibility of others' experience.



## CHAPTER 7

### ANALYSIS OF TRANSITION EXPERIENCES

Participants of this study encountered contrasting academic, cultural, social, and racial experiences while transitioning from an undergraduate music program at an HBCU to a graduate music program at a PWI. Some participants' transitions were more difficult than others; however, through their own degree perseverance all successfully navigated their way towards completing both degrees. My third research question guides discussion in this chapter: What social, cultural, and academic aspects of experience influence perseverance among African Americans who have transitioned from undergraduate music programs at HBCUs to graduate music programs at PWIs?

This chapter discusses participants' transitions in detail, illuminating the nuances that have influenced distinctions among participants. Due to the fact that I found cultural and social aspects of experiences intricately bound to one another in this study, I chose to combine them for discussion. For analysis of participants' experiences, I employ cultural capital theory (Bourdieu, 1993) and community cultural wealth theory (Yosso, 2005) as frameworks to examine academic, cultural, and social aspects of the participants' experiences. Given that race became a very important issue in this study, I chose to I employ critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and Du Bois' (2003/1903) double consciousness theory to examine issues of race and racism. Last, I provide a summary of the theoretical framework as it relates to influences on participants' pre-college and college experiences.

### **Academic Aspects of the Experience**

All participants anticipated increased academic rigor in their graduate programs; however, most of them discovered they were less prepared for graduate work than they thought. Denzel, Michael, Darren, and Johnathan were shocked to find that rehearsals at PWIs were very different from those at their respective HBCUs. In rehearsal, the director expected each ensemble member to already know their part. There was rarely any time to stop and take care of individual problems. Denzel described his first rehearsal at a PWI, saying, “The expectation was higher and the margin for error was lower.” Even Karl, who of all the participants of this study received the most music instruction prior to his graduate experience, encountered some difficulty in music ensemble rehearsals.

Darren was very impressed by the rehearsal space at UP, filled with quality instruments, chairs, and stands. However, he was very hurt to discover that his work at his HBCU had not prepared him to perform at the expected level of a graduate student at UP. He felt that his undergraduate school failed him. Morgan found performance rigor less of an issue. Instead, he told me that he was concerned about the level of discussion and language employed in his research classes. He made many efforts to seek out the help he needed from his professors, who provided extra support. For Morgan, this was one way of assimilating himself into his research classes.

### **Epistemologically Discounted**

Some participants in this study held their own perceptions that the value of a degree earned from a PWI was higher than that from an HBCU, or else were confronted by others who expressed that belief. For instance, at UP, Darren found himself around White peers who appeared to be genuinely interested in him and his place of academic

origin. However, after they discovered that he received his undergraduate degree from an HBCU, their attitudes altered from welcoming to standoffish. It was as if everything that Darren shared with them was immediately diminished. On the other hand, Johnathan assumed that he would be one of the weakest students at the University of Sedona, especially in the areas of music performance, theory, and history. To his disbelief, he was one of the more successful students in most of his graduate classes. Although Johnathan did not disclose to me the source of his perceptions that students at PWIs were more proficient than those at HBCUs, he continuously wrestled with this idea during his entire graduate experience.

Chris and Michael believed that receiving degrees from both an HBCU and a PWI would afford them additional career opportunities, “showing a little bit of diversity” on their part. Chris explained:

I think it's depending on the demographic of the particular area you're trying to find a job in. For instance, when I got my degree from ESU, I was able to get a job in Montgomery very quickly. If I were to move to California, I would probably have a hard time. But, if I got my degree from University of Alabama (UA), everybody knows about UA. They're national football champions. . . . To be totally honest with you, I feel like if I were to go into a particular job situation with two degrees from an HBCU, I may not get the same opportunities versus someone that may go in with two degrees from a PWI. Or even someone with a degree from a PWI and HBCU.

Moreover, the only master's degree offered at an HBCU that was an option for Chris was a master's in music education and he wanted a conducting emphasis.

Data from this study fit with theoretical models such as Bourdieu's cultural capital theory, which suggests that Chris' and other participants' perceptions may have been influenced by how society values specific forms of capital—in this case, credentials, institutions, and the knowledge that is presumed to accompany a degree from particular

institution. Bourdieu (1993) contends that much of what we know and understand has been socially constructed, perpetuated, and passed on. Yosso (2005) expands on Bourdieu's theory, adding that members of the dominant culture epistemologically value their knowledge over that of other cultures. Both Bourdieu and Yosso suggest that cultural artifacts and meanings belonging to the dominant culture are often validated and disseminated, while others are not.

Bourdieu (1986) refers to society's positioning of credentials as an "institutionalized" approach to the ordering of value—in this case, music degrees from HBCUs and PWIs. Chris' attention to how perceived exchange rates influence employment illuminates how cultural capital can also increase economic capital (Jæger, 2009). Du Bois (1903/2003) and Hacker (1992) would add that Chris' graduate school choice could have also been influenced by his desire to counteract his perceptions of society's view towards African Americans as inadequate and of lesser value.

## **Resources**

Participants shared that, among their experiences of transitioning from an HBCU to a PWI, the more obvious differences between institutions were differences of resources, including facilities, equipment, and number of degree programs offered. Both percussionists, Karl and Darren, were amazed by the quantity and quality of the percussive instruments available to them once they transitioned into their respective PWIs.

Participants also discovered that PWIs had larger number of faculty members who only taught in their area of specialty, whereas at HBCUs, professors often taught in multiple areas. Most of the participants stated that they benefited more from their

experience at PWIs than at HBCUs because professors' efforts were not obligated to other areas, affording participants in-depth study, particularly in applied studies and other performance-focused classes. While the issue of professors' workloads is common to many small institutions, including those that are predominantly White, this problem is shared by most HBCUs offering music degrees due to their size.

Some participants found financial aid and business office issues were easier to resolve at PWIs than HBCUs; few experienced problems with their financial aid while enrolled in a PWI. In contrast, Darren stated that at his HBCU, it often took weeks and sometimes months for students to receive their financial aid, which meant that many of them were unable to purchase necessary items such as textbooks and other school supplies, placing them weeks behind many of their peers in class. Sometimes, students' classes were cancelled because the financial aid office either overlooked or failed to post their financial awards.

### **Mentors**

All of the participants in this study described many of their professors as very supportive during their undergraduate experience. Their professors encouraged them to always work hard and also seek outside the walls of their HBCUs to see the possibilities that could become a part of their realities. Darren's music history teacher gave him tickets to see the local symphony. Chris, like other participants, recalled vivid experiences with specific professors who urged him to continue his path in music. Although he described his music theory professor's "brutal" grading policy, he spoke very highly of her and her capacity to care for all of her students.

Nathan, Chris, and Denzel were the only participants who directly described any of their HBCU professors as “mentors.” Nathan enjoyed his relationships with the African American male professors in the band department. He often engaged in discussions with them regarding music education, graduate school, and being a successful music educator. According to Nathan, it was because of his mentors and their success as African American male music educators that he chose to attend the same graduate school as they had.

Chris and Darren stated that, at their HBCUs, many of their professors had obtained at least one degree from another HBCU. These and other commonalities influenced relationship dynamics such as trust, interaction, and engagement in social environments in and out the classroom. For instance, Chris enjoyed his conversations with his euphonium professor, whom he also described as his mentor. This professor had faced similar obstacles, such as not studying privately before college and being a first-generation student. They discussed instrumental technique, the difficulties of being Black in predominately White music settings, and how to navigate through those settings as a minority. It was important to Chris and other participants to know that race wasn’t the only commonality between them and their professors and peers. For Chris, Nathan, Karl, and Denzel, it meant a great deal to also know that when their professors would say that they understood, they actually had experienced something similar.

Denzel’s saxophone professor influenced him to eventually change his major to music. In addition to saxophone lessons, he offered robust information about the University of Greenwood’s graduate program in music. Like Nathan, Denzel followed in the footsteps of his mentor by attending the same graduate school.

Darren was the only participant who described having a mentor during his graduate experience at a PWI: his percussion professor, an African American who had also earned his undergraduate degree from an HBCU and his master's from a PWI. He helped Darren to navigate through a transition experience similar to his own, in addition to facilitating Darren's growth as a musician. In addition, Darren and Nathan were the only participants who during their graduate experiences at PWIs encountered professors who not only looked like them, but who also shared many similar experiences. Some of those experiences included attending an HBCU for their undergraduate experiences, being first-generation African American undergraduate and graduate students, and aspiring to become a professor. Considering that African Americans represent roughly 5% of the total faculty members in higher education nationwide (Reed, 2005, in Gasman, Hirschfeld, & Vultaggio, 2008), Darren was very fortunate to have a mentor who shared his experiences. While a successful mentorship is not solely reliant upon race (Brown, Davis, & McClendon, 1999), mentors possessing an understanding or willingness to learn about African Americans' unique cultural issues are essential to making connections with students in efforts to provide guidance and support (Gasman, Gerstl-Pepin, Anderson-Thompkins, Rasheed, & Hathaway, 2004; Patton & Harper, 2003).

### **Cultural and Social Aspects of the Experience**

Cultural and social cues are important to providing students accustomed nuances that evoke familiarity, relevance, and validation. Some of these cues include but are not limited to language, verbal and non-verbal signals, facial expressions, humor, and proximity. Excluding Karl, participants chose to attend their respective HBCUs because they believed that the marching band, its style, and music either presented high quality

performances or a reflection of themselves. The marching band also functioned as a pool of familiar social and cultural cues, which their peers and band directors employed on a daily basis. In an effort to recreate a “Black situation,” Karl established the Black caucus in the school of music at his PWI. This group allowed Black graduate students to come together without having to put on “the face,” meaning they didn’t have to change or suppress the ways in which they communicated in efforts to fit in or not stand out within a predominantly White space. They embraced and acknowledged each other as equals through certain hugs, handshakes, and language reflective of who they were and where they came from.

Many of the participants’ HBCU experiences complemented their cultural, social, and racial identities. For instance, prior to Morgan’s tenure at Hillman State University, he was always a minority within a majority in his neighborhood and school. For him, Hillman State University not only was a place that could provide him the musical experiences that he desired, but it was a place where he could finally be a part of a majority and surround himself with people who looked liked him and who shared similar cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values.

Classroom experiences at HBCUs also supported participants’ cultural, social, and racial identities. According to participants, it wasn’t out of the ordinary to encounter elements of Black culture in their classes. As a part of his freshmen year experience, Johnathan was required to take a course on the history of his own and other HBCUs. He found this class enlightening because, although he knew that SAMU’s student population was predominantly Black, this was the first time that he realized what it meant that he was attending an HBCU. He found the class quite helpful in introducing him to an in-



depth history of African Americans in education, particularly higher education. Karl enjoyed his required survey course on African Americans in music, because he became more aware of how African Americans influenced the music in America.

As students at HBCUs, participants' social life and status revolved around the marching band and their membership in Greek organizations. At their respective PWIs, they discovered Greek life to be quite different. Darren immediately noticed that Black Greeks were not as involved in the Student Government Association (SGA) at UP as they were at KAMU, where Black Greeks influenced almost every decision-making body on campus. The Black Greeks at UP explained that they didn't feel as though they could implement any change because the White Greeks possessed greater influence. Although Darren encouraged them to get involved and to earn their respect on campus, they remained marginalized, partially due to their own inactiveness and complacency.

As an undergraduate, Michael was a member of the music fraternity Kappa Kappa Psi. In his graduate school, when Michael introduced himself as a member of the organization, he reported that his White fraternity brothers ignored and discriminated against him. On the other hand, Denzel's Phi Mu Alpha White fraternity brothers accepted him as an equal. Although Denzel wasn't able to participate due to a busy graduate schedule, the brothers continued to make every effort to include him.

I contend that participants experienced what Brower and Ketterhagen (2004) refer to as an "inherent mismatch" as they transitioned to PWIs. For instance, although participants in this study stated that they felt confident in most of their graduate classes, most of them did not identify with campus culture and most of their peers and professors. However, some participants found some comfort in constructing or becoming a member

of social networks reflective of their race and culture. Similar to Karl, Darren and Denzel found ways to fill the social and cultural void they experience at their PWIs by attending social events hosted by their fraternity brothers at a neighboring HBCU and attending predominantly Black churches. On the other hand, Michael wasn't able to piece together a social network during his graduate experience at a PWI and, as a result, he felt completely isolated. Unlike their White peers, some of the participants of this study had to work harder to create an improvised social network.

While I believe that all participants encountered some degree of social and cultural mismatch between their respective HBCUs and PWIs, each participant's experiences were unique. As single, full-time master's students, the social and cultural aspects of experience at PWIs were prominent in Denzel's, Morgan's, and Darren's experience. Michael and Chris, who were married and employed full-time during their PWI experience, were too busy to be overly concerned about support from peers and relied more on support from their wives and children. Karl, a married full-time student with no children, sought out support from other African American students from a neighboring HBCU. I believe that Nathan and Chris, both enrolled into summer master's programs, experienced less mismatch than other participants because they were part-time summer students, when enrollment is smaller and the time period shorter.

### **Racial Aspects of the Experience**

*Differential categorization.* While I sought to investigate how academic, cultural, and social aspects influenced participants' transition experience and their perseverance in this study, data revealed that race played an extensive role in participants' experiences at PWIs. Some participants found that once they moved from a space where they were a

part of a majority to one where they were a minority within a majority, their White counterparts discounted their work ethic, intelligence, commitment to education, and talent because of their race. Critical race theorists refer to this particular racialized view as differential categorization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

I believe that some participants' White peers and professors rejected their previously acquired social and cultural capital, because both originated from spaces that they perceived as inferior (Brower & Ketterhagen, 2004; Jæger, 2004). As I mentioned earlier, without a second thought, some of Darren's White peers immediately devalued his education after learning that he earned his undergraduate degree from an HBCU. Similar to Darren's experience, other participants' experienced exchange rates that resulted in racial discrimination, isolation, lack of positive feedback, and a drastically smaller social network than at their HBCUs.

*Post-racial era.* With the exception of Karl, the other participants pursued their master's degree in the twenty-first century, an era that many Americans, African Americans included, perceive as a post-racial era, largely due to the election of the first African American President of the United States, Barack Obama. However, despite their academic and musical success, their eagerness to learn, and multiple attempts to assimilate themselves into a new campus culture at their PWI, most participants in this study experienced multiple encounters of inappropriate behaviors, ranging from blatant discrimination and rejection to more subtle forms of racism, as described in Chapters 5 and 6.

*Double consciousness.* Participants believed that the behaviors exhibited by some of their White peers and professors occurred because they were Black. No matter their

success and ability to assimilate into a predominantly White space, some participants felt some of their White peers and professors did not accept them. Participants' experiences of the blatant racism are similar to the "Negro Problem," described by Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903/2003). In this book, he proposes his double consciousness theory, which suggests that the African American experience in the U.S. encompasses "two unreconciled strivings" —"being" Black and "becoming" an American—where the two never consolidate. This fixed status represents how African Americans toil daily with the experience of seeing themselves not only through their own eyes, but also through the eyes of Whites.

In his book titled *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*, Andrew Hacker (1992) complements Du Bois' double consciousness concept by emphasizing that it is also an intuitive awareness that African Americans must grasp as a rationale behind the unfairness they encounter daily. Hacker also stated that this sense of double consciousness must be passed on to younger generations to explain some of the disillusion and heartache they will consistently encounter, through no fault of their own. Both Du Bois and Hacker believe that older generations must tell their children that, because of society's unfairness, they will have to work harder than their White counterparts in order to survive—to acquire only a portion of the "American dream."

Participants in my study shared recollections similar to Hacker's expansion of Du Bois' theory. They stated that their parents and others in their community informed them that, despite their hard work, they would have to work far harder than Whites because they were Black. Karl, the oldest participant in this study, shared that as a boy, both his father and percussion teacher passed on their knowledge and experience of being Black

in America through vivid stories. Today, Karl continues to explain to his own son that the color of his skin may influence many outcomes throughout his life. Other participants referred to their double consciousness as “Black tax” or “The work harder to get half of what ‘they’ got” syndrome.

Bourdieu (1986) would assert that the participants acquired their framing of double consciousness through the embodied state, where capital is consciously or inactively inherited from family members and other close relationships. This is similar to the child investment effect of Jæger’s (2004) interpretation of Bourdieu’s cultural reproduction model, where the parent actively invests time and effort into sharing their cultural capital with their children. In this case, double consciousness is the capital that has been actively acquired by the child through this child investment effect. Based on my analysis of double consciousness in this study, this shared capital appears to have contributed to participants’ community cultural wealth, affording them the ability to navigate in exclusive educational settings and resist oppositional behaviors and attitudes within them (Yosso, 2005). Because Karl, Denzel, and Morgan previously experienced many issues of race and racism prior to their experience, they were able to employ their double consciousness during their PWI experiences. Through their previous encounters, they acquired knowledge and skills to maneuver through future spaces constructed and maintained by familiar subtle and overt racism. Yosso (2005) refers to this acquisition of information as navigational and resistant capital.

Bourdieu (1993) defines cultural capital as a collection of knowledge and codes used to understand and decipher cultural relations and artifacts valued by the dominant culture. While some participants did not possess the dominant cultural capital that

appeared to have been epistemologically valued at their respective PWIs, all were able to decipher cultural and social codes in these spaces that were laced with racism because of their framing of double consciousness.

So, we kind of maintained our own culture [in the Black caucus] because as you know the whole double-consciousness at that time was in very much in full effect. . . . At TSU, I played the game. When I was talking to White people I was articulate. I used multisyllabic words. To me, at the time, White people viewed you as incompetent. You made sure that you maintained. It was almost like living in a jungle and you had to watch for everything around you. You had to be careful because something might jump out at you. That's how I considered being around White people. But, it's cool. I knew how to handle it, but at the end of the day they're White people. So, I learned what I had to learn. It was all about the music anyway. At TSU, it was like living in an occupied zone. You live your life and you go to work and you do what you do. But, at the end of the day, you know you're in occupied territory. That was kind of my mentality and that was the thing as far as I was concerned, that was what life was anyway—a Black man in America. . . . As one of my friends would say here, “TSU was just another day in Babylon.”<sup>12</sup>

Karl's framing of his double consciousness fit with his perceptions of Whites and race relations in America. While he did not verbally make known his frustrations to his peers and professors, his vivid description unveils a truth that perhaps many African Americans, including the participants of this study, may feel about their experiences today in predominantly White spaces. For the sake of negotiating his then-environment, Karl placed fragments (i.e., language, social, and cultural cues) of himself on standby in efforts to play the game. Karl's strategy to maneuver through his predominantly White graduate experience demonstrated his skill in what Carter (2006) refers to cultural straddling. I'm not sure that Karl's ability to do so was acknowledged by many of his White peers and professors. Karl felt that most of the TSU faculty members did not

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<sup>12</sup> Babylon is the Rastafarian reference to life on earth amongst a society that is unequal, while Zion refers to the promised land.

expect him to do well in the graduate program because he was Black and he came from an HBCU, as if being Black and earning a degree from an HBCU were both synonymous with “inadequate.”

*Confronting Whiteness.* As an African American, I can attest to that feeling of not being heard or seen unless I appear to look and sound the part of a predominantly White culture, no matter the importance of my message. It is my estimation that many Whites are not able to fully grasp Karl’s and other participants’ experiences and how and why they frame their double consciousness in response to racial injustices. This inability to understand may have to do with the fact that they have not yet—or may never—experience similar racial encounters and have yet to understand the privilege that their Whiteness affords them. Contributing to this deficit of understanding are racial misunderstandings between Whites and Blacks that are entrenched in each group’s perception of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). According to Bonilla-Silva (2010), Whites often perceive racism as “prejudice,” while most people of color experience it as “systematic and institutionalized” (p. 8).

Although it is possible that some of the participants imagined these slights, it is also possible that their peers and professors were concerned that their own Whiteness or position of power was compromised. In his book titled *Racism Without Racists*, Bonilla-Silva defines this “power” as the possession of organizational and demographic capacity and resources. In order for Whites to understand that privilege accompanies their Whiteness, they must consider that their role as a member of the dominant group, whether intended or not, wields power and discounts others, specifically minorities. While I believe that Whites must be willing to divest some of their power by

deconstructing various institutional and systematic structures in efforts to empower others, I'm not sure that many Whites are prepared to do just that. In doing so, they must not only concede to another ideology, but also understand how their Whiteness influences others' destiny.

*Voice-of-Color.* It is very difficult to combat an experience with racism when you are the only one or one of few experiencing it. According to Chris, "If Black people chose to fight every ounce of racism we encountered everyday, we would go crazy and White people would think that all we do is complain." I agree with Chris. As an African American, I know all too well that in many cases I must choose to abstain, not because I accept racial injustice, but because I must choose carefully those instances that will have the greatest potential to influence change for myself and others.

While the voice-of-color has been used in legal studies to evoke understandings of race relations in the 1960s, it can also be used as a teaching tool to tear down racial barriers in society and education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). I contend that Denzel didn't feel as though his story of discrimination was credible enough to report or share. As a result, those who could have intervened for Denzel were oblivious, and it was not brought to the attention of those who could have gained valuable insight about racial issues that still persist (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). In alignment with critical race theorists, I also believe that the stories of these participants and other marginalized voices-of-color should be heard by those who occupy dominant spaces, to help them comprehend experiences encountered by people of color and assist with the deconstruction of systematic and overt racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).



In their framing of their own double consciousness, participants of this study were able to take their encounters of racial behaviors and attitudes, both subtle and undisguised, and deconstruct them, then employ them as encrypted codes in their own language, undetected by their White peers and professors. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I believe that participants and other African Americans have collected and employed these codes over time as a form of community cultural wealth. As a result, participants were able to anticipate and detect racial discrimination and other forms of opposition while also serving as first-responders in their own socially unjust situations. Participants of this study also employed their understanding as a means of capital, commissioned by themselves, in efforts to navigate in both societal and educational spaces, particularly those which were predominantly White. Instead of allowing racial attitudes and behaviors to discourage them, participants employed their own framing of double consciousness to understand the “rules of the game” and to actively participate in a game whose deck was already stacked against them.

*Like me.* Many participants chose to attend an HBCU because marching band represented their musical culture and some of them also chose to attend an HCBU because they wanted to be surrounded by people who looked like them. For Morgan, attending an HBCU was especially important. Prior to his undergraduate experience, he was always surrounded by people who didn’t look like him and who didn’t share similar beliefs and ideals. In addition, many of the social and cultural nuances that Morgan encountered outside of his family prior to his time at Hillman State University were often not of his own cultural and social identities. While Morgan contended that he learned a

great deal from his encounters with different cultures and racial and ethnic groups, he longed to be a part a space where he didn't have to work so hard to understand others.

I knew I wanted to go to a school where there were people who looked like me, in a sense, because I was raised in the military and we lived in a lot of different places and environments. I never felt that like I was around people that looked like me and, in a sense, and kind of shared my ideas and beliefs, holistically. I was always "the minority" in an environment. . . . This is going to sound totally horrible, but I can't think of a better way to say it. I'm going to say it, but I don't mean it this way, I didn't want to be "White-washed" and I don't mean in a derogatory sense, but I just wanted to have an identify of my own. Self-identification, if you will. I just wanted to be around people who looked like me. I wanted to be around people who shared the same ideas, in a cultural sense, you know. So, that was something that was big in my eyes. But, I don't mean in a way to say what's White or what's Black. I don't even agree with those philosophies.

Conversely, it was a different story for Nathan. He was always a part of a majority in both educational and social settings prior to his graduate experience.

According to Nathan, he always self-segregated himself into spaces that were predominantly Black, largely because those spaces provided a sense of comfort and familiarity. In particular, in Nathan's eyes it was inspiring to see African American music professors, particularly African American men, in positions at HBCUs he would one day hope to hold. For Nathan, seeing these successful men excelling in their work served as a positive testament that they were just as successful as their White counterparts at PWIs.

While Morgan and Nathan's prior experiences with being a part of a majority differ, both benefited from predominantly Black environments at HBCUs. Not only were they surrounded by people who looked like them and who shared their beliefs, but there was a robust representation of African American professors who were professional, hard working, and successful. These spaces served as intrinsic motivators for both Morgan and Nathan; today, Nathan is an associate professor at his undergraduate alma mater and

Morgan is pursuing a PhD in music education at a large Research I institution. Other participants of this study also shared similar ideals regarding belonging to a space that represented multiple facets of who they were as African Americans.

### **Colorism**

Although I have mobilized double consciousness theory and critical race theory as the framework of this study primarily to examine expressions of racism within the dominant group, data suggest that even African Americans, as a subordinate group, have adopted colorism as a racial ideology used to establish a racial order within their own group. Colorism is a practice of discrimination based on skin color as well as hair texture, eye color, culture, education, and class. Colorism is also used interchangeably with “pigmentocracy” and racial stratification (Bonilla–Silva, 2010, p. 182). Some participants of this study encountered colorism during their undergraduate HBCU experience. Darren stated that colorism influenced students’ perceptions of others’ beauty, intellect, and ability. Other participants reported that color stratification was employed, in addition to hair texture and length, height, and weight, to determine membership in some social groups and academic organizations. For example, lighter skinned students received preference for membership in the dance line in the marching band and some of the predominantly Black Greek organizations.

### **Essentialism**

In their experiences of transitioning to a PWI, some participants were confronted with essentialism in addition to colorism. This particular component of a racialized ideology perpetuates and empowers stereotypes by suggesting that all individual members of a particular racial group are the same (Ladson-Billings, 2013). For example,

during his graduate experience at a PWI, Michael discovered that some of his peers and professors assumed that all populations of Blacks from inner city neighborhoods are prone to committing specific crimes and are also subject to living a bad life. Michael felt that some of his White professors and peers expected him to be like those “other Blacks” and didn’t value him as an individual. Other participants had similar experiences.

### **Colorblindness**

Similar to colorism and essentialism, colorblindness also contributes to the marginalization of people of color. Colorblindness is an ideology that promotes the idea that all races are equal and that race should no longer be an issue in society. Following progressive and successful approaches toward racial equality in the 1960s, this colorblind ideology emerged as a camouflage for those “mechanisms and practices” that were employed to suppress Latinos and Blacks (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 3). According to Bonilla-Silva, colorblindness has also been referred to as “modern racism, subtle racism, aversive racism, social dominance, and competitive racism” (p. 211). Pre-Civil Rights racial attitudes moved from “No Niggers Welcomed Here” to “now you see it, now you don’t” (p. 3). As discussed in Chapter Two, critical race theorists find the use of colorblindness unsuitable as an approach to solving and understanding issues of race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yosso et al., 2004).

Despite multiple progressive approaches toward racial equality and the constant exchanging of one set of labels for another (i.e. “modern racism, subtle racism, aversive racism, competitive racism”), what still exists of racism is an arrangement of social structures in a way that perpetuates White privilege (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Colorblind approaches support many structures in society, educational structures in particular.

Within many programs of study, including those in music at PWIs, attitudes supporting colorblindness may include some professors employing a passive ideology that suggests that race does not play a role in the way they teach or engage their students. While some professors may believe that they are employing a positive stance towards discouraging inequality, others may chose to employ this ideology because it allows them to distance themselves from grappling with issues of race. Either way, both rationales support the perpetuation of colorblindness in educational settings, by failing to acknowledge race as an important piece of students' identity.

### **Intersectionality**

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) define intersectionality as the intersection of multiple ideals, beliefs, preferences, and external characteristics such as race, religion, and sexual orientation that collectively contributes to the identity of an individual. Critical race theorists believe that every individual holds loyalties, subscriptions, and ideals that contribute to their own unique identity (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). For instance, Morgan stated that many people perceive all Black students at an HBCU to be the same, assuming that they listen to the same music and subscribe to the same sets of values and beliefs, but he knew that this was not the case. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) would frame Morgan's understanding of the individuality of each Black student as intersectionality.

I believe that this tenet of CRT brings to the fore the fact that every individual, although they may share the same race, represents a more complex set of identities, which may not be easily consolidated into a category. In regards to education, this tenet aligns well with "the other CRT," culturally relevant teaching, it calls educators to

acknowledge students as individuals and not duplications of each other. Instead of compressing individualities, the use of intersectionality glorifies unique differences. Denzel was frustrated that the wealth of musical styles he knew were not recognized at the PWI:

Make sure that you maintain an open mind about different music and styles. Don't be so close-minded, thinking that what you do is the only way to do it. There are many ideas all over. Don't write off HBCU marching bands just because it's different. Sometimes I think you don't understand that our audience differs from those you perform for. It's not about us not understanding the music that you perform, but it is more of us drawing people to the program. But, also don't think that you are the only people to understand and perform *your* music.

### **Effects of Racism for the Participants**

Many institutions of higher education, particularly PWIs, enact structural racism by consistently emphasizing and accommodating a White Eurocentric approach towards student learning and engagement. This includes providing not only educational settings that exclusively promote White culture, but also academic cultural, and social spaces where White voices dominate the exchange of dialogue and ideas. For all the participants of this study, this reality was reflective of their experiences as the only or one of few African Americans in their graduate music programs at their respective PWIs. Most people assume that issues of race and racism are no longer a concern. I contend that participants' experiences of structural racism are a result of incomplete and unfinished efforts toward inclusion spanning back as far as the Emancipation Proclamation. Due to these facts, blatant and structural racism created real obstacles for the participants in this study. Some of the participants of this study experienced racism from their peers and professors. They also encountered structural racism, including but not limited to essentialism, lack of diversity among curricula, and absence of diversity in student and

faculty populations. As revealed in this study, the effects of racism can be frustrating, disheartening, and damaging. For instance, Johnathan wanted to drop out of his master's program because of his professor's discouraging remarks and the narrowly tailored agenda of the school of music. Combined, these experiences made Johnathan feel insignificant and also contributed to him suffering a breakdown. Among thousands of students on a campus situated in one of the most racially diverse cities in the U.S., Michael felt isolated and restrained to only his own space because of the racism he experienced in his classes and among his fraternity brothers. Although Denzel was able to make friends in the school of music at his PWI, he didn't feel as though he could speak to them or his professors about the racism he encountered because he felt that no one would believe him. On the other hand, although Karl responded differently to the racism he encountered by asserting his Blackness, I contend that Karl's encounters with racism and those of other African Americans discourage many people of color from attempting to situate themselves into predominantly White spaces.

Perhaps these, along with other racial deficits of PWIs, deter many African Americans from pursuing advanced degrees at these institutions, contributing to a scarcity of Black prospective students. While race is socially constructed, institutions of higher education should be aware that “[racism] is a social reality that produces real effects on the actors racialized as ‘Black’ or ‘White’” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 9).

Theorists such as Derrick Bell, Victor Delgado, and Gloria Ladson-Billings suggest critical race theory as a means to assess racism in both society and education. Participants mentioned experiences of racial discrimination or issues regarding race during their tenure at their respective PWIs. In addition, they all reported a lifetime of

experiences with multiple forms of racial discrimination. In this sense, although many Whites may view racism as “aberrant,” the participants experienced racism as “normal” (UNC-Ashville, 2013). In a presentation on *Critical Race Theory and Education*, Gloria Ladson-Billings (2013) stated that people of color experience the “1,000 daily cuts” of racism—whether overt or covert. Due to the controversy that surrounds them, only a small percentage of those daily cuts are visible enough to become “news worthy” (Ladson-Billings). Some of the most recent and controversial instances include the 2013 and 2014 deaths of Trahvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner, three unarmed African American men, all killed by White men. None of the White men were indicted.

Racism, in particular covert and structural racism, can appear in various forms. For instance, a White retailer may refuse to sell an African American a product by suggesting that they look at less expensive items, thinking they can’t afford it simply because they are Black. While this example is difficult to provide evidence of discrimination, people of color can detect the signs of racism miles away. Other examples may include the retailer keeping a close eye on someone from the cash register or while they are stocking shelves. Both of these types of encounters were experienced by high-profile Black celebrities: Oprah Winfrey, while shopping in Sweden<sup>13</sup> and Jay-Z while shopping in Barneys in New York.<sup>14</sup> Despite African Americans’ social status, education, or income, they are not exempt from racism, in the U.S. and abroad. For people of color, detecting racism is like sensing a cold after having encountered it only once. First, there

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/09/world/oprah-winfrey-racism-switzerland/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/26/us/new-york-profiling-claims/>



are the smallest changes in your body from sporadic sneezing to coughing. However, after encountering a cold, most people understand what they must do to troubleshoot their illness, either through the use of Advil, chicken noodle soup, or fluids. However, unlike the common cold, there is no clear-cut remedy to rid the world of racism.

### **Summary**

Prior to their experiences at an HBCU and a PWI, participants acquired shared experiential knowledge regarding academic, cultural, social, and racial aspects of African American experience through personal encounters with others in their immediate families and respective schools and communities. These relationships and experiences provided participants access to both dominant cultural capital and community cultural wealth. The knowledge they obtained not only informed their ideals and beliefs regarding education, music, and issues of race and racism, but it also framed their perceptions of themselves and others in the world around them, thus setting a precedent framework for their HBCU and PWI experiences.

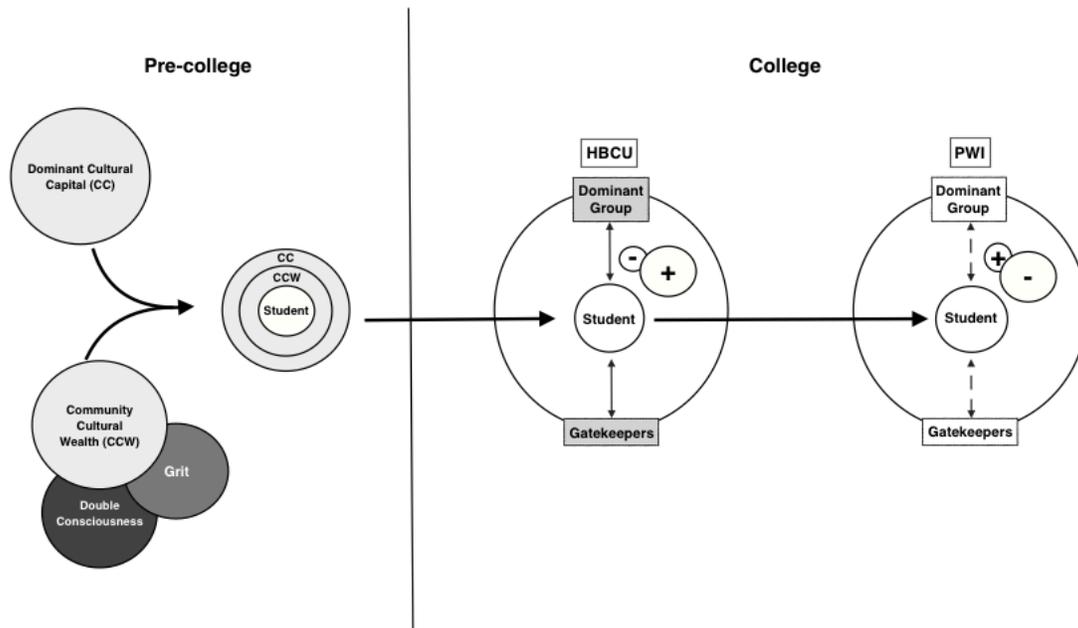


Figure 11. Influences on Participants' Transitioning from an HBCU to a PWI

Above is an illustration of those influences that I discovered to have either fostered or obstructed participants' perceptions of their own perseverance and success. While I have stated that not all participants encountered identical experiences, many of them grappled with similar institutional issues as well as societal structures that discounted their academic, cultural, social, and racial capital. Participants' pre-college and college experiences and their possession of dominant cultural capital and community cultural wealth funded their successful transition to a PWI and completion of their degree programs.

While I asserted in Chapter Six that double consciousness and Grit were employed by participants as a means of perseverance to negotiate adversity, both also contributed to their community cultural wealth. Although much of the capital that participants acquired prior to and during their undergraduate experiences was successfully exchanged for additional information in an HBCU setting, I discovered that

some was often discounted and rejected within a PWI setting. Academic, social and cultural, and racial aspects of their PWI experience funded these contrasting outcomes. After participants settled into their respective HBCUs, they found that their culture, race, and possession of capital were accepted and also enriched by an environment that matched their own identity. However, after transitioning into their PWIs, they were met with academic, cultural, social, and racial adversity as well as positive experiences that assisted them in staying the course.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

In this chapter I provide recommendations for HBCUs and PWIs to improve their educational spaces in efforts to provide African Americans and other minority students more positive experiences. Accompanying my own suggestions are participants' personal recommendations from the fourth interview of this study in response to my questions: How would you compare your HBCU experience to that of your PWI experience, academically, culturally, socially, and racially? If you had the opportunity to speak with the administrators, professors, and students of HBCUs and PWIs in efforts to improve experiences of African Americans, what would you tell them?

In addition, I provide recommendations for future possibilities, including forming partnerships, facilitating conversations surrounding cultural, social, and racial differences, understanding and dismantling colorblindness, and encouraging voices-of-color. I conclude with suggestions to African American students based on participants' experiences and my own.

#### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate degree perseverance among African Americans transitioning from an undergraduate music program at a Historically Black College (HBCU) to a graduate music program at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Four research questions guided this study: What are the experiences of African Americans who have transitioned from undergraduate music programs at HBCUs to graduate music programs at PWIs? How do these students compare academic, social, and cultural aspects of experience within two institutional environments? What are these

students' self-perceptions of their own degree perseverance? What social, cultural, and academic aspects of experience influence perseverance among African Americans who have transitioned from undergraduate music programs at HBCUs to graduate music programs at PWIs?

Participants reported that the following factors contributed to positive undergraduate experiences at their HBCUs: historical and cultural value of HBCUs to the African American community; predominantly Black student and faculty population; curricula representative of African American contributions to education and society; cultural, and social, and racial awareness of professors and peers; and social and cultural organizations designed to reflect students' identity and values. Some of the more prominent organizations on the campuses of HBCUs include Greek music and non-music groups and the marching band, each of which functioned as a subculture within the culture of the institution; participants lacked similar organizations at their PWIs.

While participants anticipated some obstacles associated with graduate study in their new predominantly White spaces, some participants encountered more challenges than they could imagine. Almost immediately after transitioning into their respective PWIs, participants encountered both subtle and overt discrimination from some students and faculty.

Despite participants' adverse encounters and varying lack of positive support, they persevered to complete their degrees. As a matter of fact, they used their encounters with oppositional attitudes and behaviors as capital (Yosso, 2005; Bourdieu, 1993) to fund their success, affording them the capacity to steer through and negotiate familiar and unfamiliar spaces. While this study documents the experiences of eight African American

men, their accounts may represent the current status of many African Americans' experiences in higher education and music education in the U.S.

### **Recommendations for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)**

Since 1837 to the time of this dissertation, HBCUs have managed to adapt to a continuously evolving society while continuing to serve African Americans and other underrepresented populations. From providing freed slaves skills and knowledge needed to survive an unaccustomed environment to shaping and producing some of the brightest minds of the twentieth- and twenty-first century, HBCUs have been tremendously successful. For many students, HBCUs are safe havens where they can engage not only in the subject matter, but also learn about themselves and their history within a society that regularly discounts them. Nathan makes this suggestion to HBCUs:

[Don't] give up [on yourselves] because I think that you are very valuable to African Americans and to this country. There are so many stories of African American students who did not get into a big school, but they were able to get an education by going to HBCUs. Know that you are a very valuable part to the social education system here in America.

In this section, I offer recommendations for HBCUs to improve academic, social and cultural, and racial aspects of their students' experiences as undergraduate music majors.

#### **Academic Aspects of Experience at HBCUs**

While HBCUs have been successful at educating African Americans and other underrepresented populations, they might consider improving in several areas. Resources, balance in the curriculum, and institutional funding are several of these areas.

##### *Resources*

After experiencing resources such as diverse curricula, highly qualified faculty, and adequate facilities and technology during their graduate experience at a PWI, most

participants of this study realized they had lacked resources at their HBCU. HBCUs should, within available financial resources, strengthen curricula, faculty (both in number and in professional development), facilities, and technology, along with other resources, to provide students an array of possibilities to successfully navigate their college experiences and also change their communities around them.

*Balance in the music curriculum*

According to some participants, HBCU music programs have a tendency to focus heavily on the marching band,<sup>15</sup> either by employing the band as recruitment tool or as an exclusive showpiece for their music departments, while marginalizing other areas in students' learning and music making. While music students engage in multiple experiences at HBCUs that facilitate their musical understanding, such imbalances may lead to students adopting a dominant perception towards marching band while maintaining deficiencies in other performance areas. In particular, for those transitioning to a PWI where performance emphasizes other ensembles such as orchestra, wind band ensembles, jazz band, and chamber ensembles, students must quickly acquire knowledge and skills to be successful in these less familiar musical cultures, ones that may not be reflective of their prior experience. In graduate school, Darren, Denzel, and Johnathan struggled in both large and small musical performance ensembles. Much of their frustration and difficulty was traced back to their experience at their HBCUs, where they

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<sup>15</sup> In this study, the phrase “the band” is synonymous for the marching band.

were not provided the musical experiences and information to be successful in a music program with a western classical emphasis.

I think the bands [at HBCUs] have lower expectations and higher expectations for the wrong things. I think if they spent more time on concert or classical music as they do marching band, I feel that the schools would be interchangeable, as far as HBCU and PWI programs go. If they had prepared me better, I would have transitioned a lot smoother. . . . I was nowhere where I needed to be.

Instead of emphasizing the marching band in the musical experience and curricula, I suggest HBCUs reflect and take account of their musical offerings and accomplishments as they have influenced student experience and their connections beyond their walls. Some HBCUs have outstanding choral and jazz programs that have received both national and international acclaim. Although HBCU marching bands offer a very unique and culturally relevant approach to musicianship, performance, and entertainment, music programs could include in their objectives other opportunities for students to explore their musical aspirations, whether they are performance-based or not. Reorganizing curricular imbalances could possibly ease students' transitions to PWIs.

In addition, most participants of this study contended that HBCUs were deficient in providing students experiences where they could practice their skills in a real setting.

Chris states:

Don't allow the curriculum to be focused around marching band. Make sure students are well rounded once they leave your school. Provide them with experiences on the podium and the opportunity to apply all the things they learned in methods classes and other classes. Some things we just don't use. Make a connection between what a band director actually does and the knowledge that we receive in our undergraduate experience. It's almost like you leave it up to the student to make the connection once they start teaching and for some people, that's too late. . . . We need opportunities of practical application.



HBCUs might reimagine the strategies they employ to facilitate student learning. In their degree programs, participants of this study were required to enroll in classes such as marching band fundamentals, arranging, woodwind and brass methods, and practicum. I believe that, while each class may provide students explicit experiences and knowledge, these classes must be taught in a way that fosters connection and practice in spaces other than those that are within controlled university classroom environments. Morgan shares similar concerns:

Don't limit your students or put them in a box. In my experience, my degree was tracked towards teaching in an inner city school or teaching a certain student. Also, there wasn't a focus on going to conferences. We didn't discuss things like, what does it take to effectively build a concert ensemble or jazz program. You know, things that are essential to being a music educator. Provide experiences and opportunities for people to partake in those. Sponsor three to five students if possible to go to the Midwest Clinic or to the state or national conventions. That's something that can be done year round. . . . The focus [at my HBCU] was never on all the different things needed to develop a true musician, in my opinion. Provide a curriculum to prepare students for those.

Data from this study suggest that aspiring music professionals should not be limited to only those experiences within the confines of the HBCU community, they should be given every opportunity to access the world around them by also attending conferences and performances and engaging in conversations with other students and music professionals around the globe. In doing so, students might be able to experience not only a different way of doing things, but they may also be able to share with others the many wonderful experiences they have had while attending their respective HBCUs. Students from HBCUs often possess a wealth of knowledge and experiences that have been, in many ways, marginalized or hidden from conversations in other higher education institutions. Empowering students to navigate through various professional conferences

in the music field may allow them the opportunity to seize valuable information that their White counterparts consistently access on a daily basis. They may also be able to take leadership roles, make presentations as well connect and form lasting relationships and networks that will aid them in years to come as a professional and music educator.

In addition to the lack of facilities and materials, some participants included that HBCUs also lacked a robust number of faculty members in music who possessed a terminal degree. Faculty holding doctoral degrees increases an institution's institutionalized capital, while providing students access to a wealth of knowledge, skill, and experiences. In this regard, Darren felt as though his undergraduate alma mater failed him.

To you administrators, the worst thing that was told to me [at the PWI], was that it's not that I can't perform, it's just that I didn't know the information. So, the fact that I graduated from the institution that I love and didn't know, that's blasphemy. I spent over \$40,000 for the information and why did I not know? No one else should graduate from this institution and not know. So, if that means that you are charging your professors of going back to earn higher-level degrees that they don't have or having them participate in faculty meetings and staff development, they should. . . . Invest in the students because I'm investing in this university. I'm paying tuition and when I graduate and if I become famous you're going to want to get something from me, right? So, how about you invest in me now, so when I become a product later, you can actually clap your hands and say, "You know, I did all I could for that student"—instead of jumping on my coattail when I make it. Then, I'll be mad and I probably won't do anything for the university.

Darren, who is now working towards a doctoral degree in percussion performance, has a desire to provide students the opportunities he wasn't afforded by sharing his own knowledge and experiences.

If you think about the alumni that come through this institution, a lot of times they will give freely to their alma mater. I mean, would you really charge your alma mater what you charge other institutions for your information? No. . . . There are so many things I want to give to them . . . The most I want to give back is information.

### *Institutional funding*

While Chapter Two provides a snapshot of funding obstacles encountered by many HBCUs, for some participants of this study, obtaining financial aid at their respective HBCUs was a very frustrating process. Regularly, their institution's financial aid office disbursed their financial aid rewards weeks or even months after the start of school, delaying their participation in class. Sometimes, students dropped a class because they were so far behind their peers, opting to take it the following semester. However, upon their transition into a PWI, access to their financial aid was never a problem. In many cases, they received their aid before the start of each semester, which placed students at ease, knowing that they had a greater chance of being successful in their classes.

Students should not have to wait to gain access to approved federal and state funds to pay for items such as tuition, fees, books, and room and board. As some participants stated, it is very unsettling and embarrassing to be denied access into an educational space through no fault of your own. I was unable to find information about why students at HBCUs had to wait for financial aid. Based on the literature that I reviewed regarding funding at HBCUs, it is my estimation that, for many HBCUs, it may be a result of federal government bureaucracy or the absence of a cash flow until federal aid funds arrive. However, if the cause is simply mismanagement, then HBCUs should take proactive and responsible steps in monitoring the performance and operation of their financial aid offices and staff. Such steps may include having students complete performance surveys, annual and bi-annual audits of financial aid, and consistent personnel updates according to student population increases and performance ratings.

## **Social and Cultural Aspects of Experience at HBCUs**

### *Hazing*

Despite the fact that HBCUs successfully create both social and educational spaces where African American students can learn and engage with individuals of similar identities and backgrounds, some of these spaces harbor subcultures that may also impede healthy student experiences. Such spaces include the marching band and Greek music and non-music organizations. While it is evident that the marching band played an important role in the experiences of the participants of this study, some of their experiences involved verbal, mental, and physical hazing, where they either assumed a role as a recipient or distributor. Recipients were often those without authority or power, and distributors were usually upperclassmen occupying leadership positions. Denzel and Johnathan were both recipients of the hazing culture of the marching band without ever actively participating in the hazing practices at their schools. Due the fact that they both chose to avoid most hazing by not pledging the band, they were labeled “outcasts” by their fellow band peers. While hazing appears as though it has been going on in various college settings for generations, practices at some HBCUs have become worse, resulting in the extreme case of the death in 2011 of Robert Champion, a former drum major of the Florida A&M University Marching Band. So far, Robert Champion’s death has been the last reported fatality of hazing in HBCU marching bands.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.tampabay.com/news/humaninterest/recounting-the-deadly-hazing-that-destroyed-famu-bands-reputation/1260765>

While marching band experiences in this study are limited to participants' undergraduate experiences at HBCUs, I do not discount the fact that student organizations at PWIs, including marching bands, have also engaged in a hazing culture. Recently, members of The Ohio State University Marching Band, a predominantly White band organization, were found guilty of engaging in a hazing culture that included sexual harassment and alcohol abuse.<sup>17</sup> Both PWIs and HBCUs must take effective measures toward correcting and eradicating the potent culture of hazing within their institutions. According to some participants of this study, HBCU marching bands have assimilated much of the culture of Black Greek organizations, adopting not only their social and cultural expressions, but also their hazing practices. While some institutions have already begun to confront hazing on their campuses, I suggest that HBCUs and PWIs consider closely investigating other structural and cultural systems that have influenced their own existence in efforts to understand a culture that has become destructive and very harmful. Such systems include the military, Greek and social organizations, and slavery. Some analysts contend that HBCUs, especially, should focus their inquiry to investigate attitudes and behaviors of the slaves and slave masters<sup>18</sup> in the U.S. They contend that, in doing so, HBCUs may find rationales that support such a destructive culture and may understand hazing's precursors to more effectively dismantle its current culture. Fear, incompetent individuals, and harmful measures should not be employed in efforts to

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<sup>17</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/25/us/ohio-state-fires-marching-band-director-after-finding-tradition-of-sexual-hazing.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/25/us/ohio-state-fires-marching-band-director-after-finding-tradition-of-sexual-hazing.html?_r=0)

<sup>18</sup> (<http://rolandmartinreports.com/blog/2011/12/hazing-and-black-colleges-is-the-practice-of-hazing-more-prevalent-at-hbcus-can-the-practice-be-stopped-video/>).

produce a musical product or experience. I encourage HBCUs to investigate and hold their faculty accountable for confronting hazing and acquiring more appropriate strategies than hazing to motivate and empower student participation and learning.

### **Racial Aspects of Experience at HBCUs**

Given that most HBCUs serve predominantly Black populations, most people assume that they do not wrestle with issues of race and racism. Darren, in regards to his HBCU experience, witnessed firsthand how some groups and individuals used colorism as a means to decide who is accepted and who is not. As a boy, some of Darren's friends called him "Crunchy Black," a nickname that referenced his dark skin. As he moved into his undergraduate experience, some of his close friends continued to reference him in that manner. When a White professor also called him that nickname, Darren stated that the problem wasn't necessarily that his professor used the name, but that she employed his nickname as means to compare him with other Black students whose skin was lighter. Darren also mentioned that colorism played a factor in the selection of dance team members in some HBCU marching bands. To eliminate colorism and other forms of racism, I believe that HBCUs might consider examining the history of racism and oppressive legal institutions such as slavery to understand and to educate students about how and why African Americans have adopted racial ideologies to organize themselves.

### *Summary of Recommendations for HBCUs*

As I mentioned at the onset, HBCUs offer a unique environment that provides underrepresented populations a valuable education within a society that often rejects them. While deficits must be overcome by sensible and responsible means in efforts to move forward and remain relevant, I am very optimistic that other institutions can learn a

great deal from HBCUs, particularly the strategies and methods used to provide African Americans an optimal learning experience, despite institutional deficiencies. However, in efforts to remain necessary and valid, HBCUs must effectively and honestly investigate their own spaces and be willing to improve their inconsistencies and deficiencies, while ridding themselves of any and all harmful elements that will derail or impede their existence. Opting out of doing so may continue to contribute to the closures of HBCUs, an active process that has taken place since the 1890s.

### **Recommendations for Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)**

Most participants of this study stated that they enjoyed many aspects of their graduate experience at their respective PWI. Many of the participants were simply overjoyed that they were enrolled at a very large school. They appreciated the fact that many of their peers and professors were very respectful and encouraging. Participants also relished having adequate facilities and resources, highly qualified professors, and reliable financial aid offices. On the other hand, participants encountered some academic, cultural, and social issues in their respective PWIs. Racial issues often appeared throughout all their PWI experiences.

### **Academic Aspects of Experience at PWIs**

While most of the participants in this study stated that they did not encounter academic difficulties after transitioning into their respective PWIs, I believe that some of the academic experiences they encountered in their classes were surrounded by cultural, social, and racial deficits of some of their peers and professors. Such experiences discouraged some participants, and a few considered leaving their programs. Morgan offers some advice to graduate programs at PWIs:

There is a high drop out rate with African Americans in graduate programs and I don't know about music education, I do know it is in conducting. Be patient with every student because every student is different. There is not a person who enrolls in a graduate program with the intention to dropout. They go with the intention to learn. . . . Work with students. Don't just assume that he or she should have learned what you are attempting to teach [your students] in undergrad. Also, don't assume that because HBCU graduates weren't able to get certain information, that their programs are inferior. That's not the case, they were just taught differently. You have a person in front of you with the potential to work hard. Don't limit them by saying, "Oh, you don't understand this information, so you are out of the program or you need remediation or whatever." If you never allow learning to happen, then you shouldn't say that. I have had the experience of knowing people who that happened to. Their professors were like, "Oh, they should have known [that]. Let's weed them out." No, what we should be saying is, "What should we be doing to mold this student!"

Initially, Morgan struggled during his graduate PWI experience, particularly in his graduate music education classes. Much of the language used in discussion excluded Morgan from participating. While Morgan sought the help he needed from his professors, he could have gone unnoticed by falling through huge cracks constructed by unfair and unbalanced practices or lack of awareness situated in the structures of PWIs. In comparison, Johnathan was overlooked and disregarded because his musical goals did not align with those of the school of music at Stenton.

Honestly, the faculty and student population are very goal-oriented. If you weren't much help to where they were trying to [go], they didn't have much to say. They were like, "Can you play this? If not, ok. We'll, find someone else." That's it. I don't know how to say this without being rude, but there was a way they took the joy out of making music. Stenton really stripped me of a lot of passion I had for music. I went to other schools while I was at Stenton and the way the students interacted with each other or how they supported each other was much more different. In the end, it just stripped me of all that I wanted to do in music. I became a better sax player, but not the way I wanted to. While I was in grad school, I actually had a breakdown. I was about to leave school because it was just too demanding, mentally. There was literally no appreciation for what I was trying to do. This is from the professors and some students. It just trickled down and I am told that that was not even a stressful situation. Some say that at bigger schools it's worse. But, I'm sure they've never had the professor say, "I've given



up on you." I'm sure that's never happened. . . . I've spent the last year and a half trying to rebuild what they tore down.

Like Johnathan, I also encountered discouraging comments from some professors. During my undergraduate experience, after reviewing my research paper, one of my White professors stated, "I can get a monkey to write a better paper than this!" However, I had a trusted mentor to whom I could report my experience; Johnathan had no one. I recommend that PWIs be alert for racism in all forms, blatant and subtle, and provide mentorships and other supportive networks that will allow students to safely report racist comments and actions. Darren concludes:

It's not that we can't learn. The simple fact is that we came from somewhere that didn't provide us the opportunities that are afforded here. You have a lot of resources. The students who you typically teach have had access to these same means. . . . Some of the students that you are getting from HBCUs were big fish in small pond and it's not up to you to break them and say, "You're not that good!" It's your job to expose them and say, "It's more to it than what you thought." . . . You have a blank canvas right now because these students are coming to you and pretty much begging for help . . . You're getting the cream of the crop from these HBCUs because these aren't the lazy ones. . . . These were the focused ones, so now you have very focused and intently minded students who know exactly what they want to do, but don't know just exactly how to get there. You're getting that type of student that's not going to play games. . . . These students that you are getting from this HBCU are about business. These students are ready and willing to learn anything you're trying to teach them.

While many graduate music programs want to hire more minority faculty, relatively few African Americans hold doctoral degrees. I suggest that PWIs not only employ and recruit more African American professors and students, but also immediately reflect on how their environments, decisions, and actions may devalue or discount Africans Americans. While I believe and support the idea that African Americans possess insight into issues surrounding race and racism due to their own personal experiences, they should not be sought after in efforts to meet a quota or to help the university or

music profession appear more diverse. Institutions must find ways to fully include African Americans into campus culture and administrative positions with intent to permanently influence and abolish the status quo. More specifically, many music programs lack diverse curricula reflective of African Americans and their musical contributions to this country. Students could benefit, not only from seeing themselves through visual representations, but also through musical elements in their life that define who they are as individuals and as members of a cultural group (Gay, 2002).

### **Social and Cultural Aspects of Experience at PWIs**

Some participants found that many of the students at the PWIs were so used to the extensive facilities that they failed to appreciate their own privilege. Although participants in this study were not familiar with the privileged surroundings of PWIs, once they arrived into these spaces, they devoured every ounce of knowledge they could acquire.

Besides the obvious, being an African American among many Whites, participants noticed that their background, language, sense of style, and musical tastes, were different than their peers and professors. These identifiers, as well as previously acquired information from their HBCUs, were at times, underappreciated, particularly either by their White peers or professors in their music programs. In some instances, issues of race and racism fueled the devaluing of participants' identities and knowledge. Participants reported that some White students or professors assumed that, because participants of this study were Black and that they transitioned from an HBCU, they were incompetent, unintelligent, and inadequate. Some Whites went as far as purposefully leaving both Michael and Denzel out of their group homework sessions in hopes of

“weeding them out.” PWIs, while they are accountable for the students that they traditionally service, must be more attentive and sensitive to students who are different.

Michael states:

Chill out with stereotyping Black people. . . . Be more open-minded and diverse. You can have your standards, but understand where minority students are coming from. Everybody doesn't come from "hosh-posh" suburbia and they may not speak a certain way or dress a certain way, but they still may be just as intelligent as the others. They were just raised differently, so be more open-minded and more accepting. . . . Be more inclusive. Don't be afraid. Everybody's not going to rob you or jack you for your car.

I believe that, if the some participants of this study had access to familiar social and cultural networks, some experiences of isolation could have been lessened. Karl and Denzel found ways to create these experiences on their own, meanwhile, Michael and Johnathan were not able to do the same. These social and cultural networks do not have to be exclusive to the student's field of study. They can include groups of people from student services, African American studies, sociology, and graduate studies, just to name a few. Many campuses have established African American student organizations. Each group could play an essential role in helping African American students customize their own graduate experience and support group(s). These supports may also help institutions decrease the effect of what Brower and Ketterhagen (2004) refer to as the “inherent mismatch.” In the process, African Americans would not have to work so hard to establish a support system; it would already be in place.

### **Racial Aspects of Experience at PWIs**

While *storytelling* (Delgado, 1989 in Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 57), also referred to as *voice-of-color* (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), was introduced to inform legal spaces, I contend that stories similar to those of the participants of this study can also be

employed to communicate differences and inequities that have either gone unnoticed or ignored. Through the understanding of critical race theory (CRT) and supporting concepts like storytelling and intersectionality, institutions, both HBCUs and PWIs, may gain a clearer picture of how they continue to empower and perpetuate issues of race and racism. More specifically, PWIs will understand that racism is a reality encountered regularly by people of color. Storytelling can be used to help promote appreciation and awareness of each institution's culture through the use of theoretical lenses such as CRT and double consciousness theory, while critiquing and perhaps dissolving essentialism and stereotypes (Ladson-Billings, 2011). Storytelling may be employed in preservice music education programs through the use of case studies in efforts to bring awareness to issues of race and to also help students acquire knowledge and skills that may prove helpful in their future careers as music educators. These cases studies could also bring to light specific issues such as intersectionality while also empowering discussion and sharing of stories accompanying those students in that space.

African Americans, along with other minorities and their musical tastes, languages, backgrounds, and types of knowledge, should be acknowledged and recognized. Participants reported experiences that clearly exhibit a different scenario. Participants felt discounted not only by their peers, but also by professors occupying positions of authority and power to influence students' perception of themselves and of those around them. It is imperative that PWIs recognize that, within their spaces, issues of race and racism still exist and are perpetuated by ignorance, superiority, and uninformed attitudes. Unless PWIs decide to take an aggressive stance toward

inappropriate racial attitudes and ideals, the inclusive and diverse spaces they often illuminate may appear to minorities as a hypocritical message—the status quo is enough.

### **Possibilities**

In this section, I provide HBCUs and PWIs some concepts that may prove beneficial to their students and professors. While some of these approaches have been employed outside of the music profession, I believe that they might establish a starting point for music programs in both HBCUs and PWIs.

### **Partnerships**

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, Shears et al. (2004) described how a partnership between Southern University, their HBCU, and Colorado State University (CSU), their PWI, helped ease their transition into a predominantly White space (Shears et al., 2004). Professors from each school were able to exchange information about prospective students, the HBCU environment that they were departing, and the PWI they were transitioning into. These assets helped participants navigate easily, knowing that they possessed valuable information of their new surroundings. I propose that more institutions consider forming similar partnerships. Many HBCUs are just a stone's throw away from a PWI: Florida A&M University and Florida State University, Texas Southern University and the University of Houston, Southern University and Louisiana State University, and Xavier University and Tulane University. Partnerships can range from exchanging music, equipment, funding strategies, or performance spaces, to the music students and faculty of each institution meeting regularly to share information, strategies, and teaching methods. Considering Bourdieu's cultural capital theory of how cultural codes are created and perpetuated within a dominant culture, HBCUs and PWIs can

choose to redefine a healthier culture through the creation of new codes and meanings within collaborative approaches such as partnerships. Not only will both institutions be able to collectively redefine their cultures, but they will also possess the authority to deconstruct and dismantle racial codes, meanings, or artifacts that are harmful and nonessential to their objective of providing their students optimal learning experiences.

### **Facilitating Conversations**

While partnerships have the potential to provide students with multiple opportunities to connect and confront academic, cultural, social, and racial differences, facilitating conversations about the same within a classroom setting can also be very beneficial. I discovered in my experience of teaching two music classes at a community college in Arizona that students were more prepared to discuss topics surrounding race, racism, and social and cultural differences than I thought. One class was composed of high school students from a local charter school and the other included community college students whose ages ranging from age 18 to 37. Initially, I planned to discuss these issues as they related to various types of music and people further in the semester. However, we dove into these discussions in the second week of class.

Now, are these conversations difficult and complex? Absolutely. However, given a continuously more diverse population and more challenging racial climate in the U.S., it is vital that these conversations no longer wait or be placed on hold. While these conversations have the potential to be quite informative and emancipatory, avoiding them can further obstruct positive strides toward legitimizing these conversations. I suggest those who do not feel comfortable facilitating conversations surrounding issues of race and racism thoughtfully read the work of scholars such as Geneva Gay (2002), Gloria

Ladson-Billings (2009), and Tara Yosso (2007) to understand the importance of having such discussions. I also recommend educators to seek out professional development opportunities to increase their skills in creating safe spaces to engage in conversations about race and cultural and social differences with their students. As younger generations have influenced multiple historical events in the U.S. surrounding racial, cultural, and social disparities, I believe that they will also provide us with fresh and unique ways of understanding and dismantling disparities in society. However, we must be respectful of their expertise and willing to listen and receive their information.

### **Colorblindness**

Sociologists such as Bonilla-Silva (2010) contend that racism, as we understand it today, exists because it has evolved over time—moving from overt to covert. He also believes that racism is alive and well, manifesting as colorblindness. Colorblind ideology was employed in the 1960s to achieve diversity through efforts such as affirmative action; however, it has become camouflage for racial opposition and attitudes (Yosso, Parker, Solórzano & Lynn, 2004). Structural racism is hidden within housing policies, price differentiation between affluent and low-income neighborhoods, and law enforcement and government agencies, all masquerading as equal opportunity for all. Within higher education, those structures include, for example, admission policies, music audition policies and practices, funding, curricula, and grading and assessment strategies.

For many institutions accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), the only accrediting agency for music in the U.S, provides important institutional capital. However, it is very difficult for many HBCUs to adhere to NASM's accreditation standards, which require documentation of many resources, personnel, and

funding. As I have stated in Chapter Two, HBCUs face a drastically different reality regarding funding than their PWI counterparts. In addition, Title IV states that in order for institutions to acquire certain federal funds, they must obtain accreditation through a national accrediting agency. To further complicate the issue, acquiring institutional membership from NASM is by peer review; therefore, HBCUs are evaluated by a governing body that is not representative of themselves. Today, only 27 out of all of the 74 music-degree-granting HBCU programs have NASM accreditation.

While some participants gave accounts of overt racism, I cannot dispute that issues of covert racism were at play or that professors and students employed attitudes of colorblindness. To confront attitudes of colorblindness, we can make Whiteness and Blackness visible by examining ourselves, our roles in society, how those roles are perpetuated, and how Whiteness, Blackness, or other racial positions connect to privilege and power. For example, Ladson-Billings (2004) and Hacker (1992) involved students in their classes in temporarily assuming roles opposite their race to understand how society rewards and punishes individuals based on skin color. Students in these classes, particularly those who were White, found that they were not as willing as they initially thought to give up their roles without some type of compensation. I believe that similar activities can be implemented, not only for the sake of White students and professors understanding their Whiteness, but also to understand how racialized roles have been assigned to create hierarchical structures of power. Perhaps similar approaches can be implemented with individuals assuming professional roles in higher education prior to the start of those roles and through staff development.



## Missing Voices

As I have mentioned throughout this study, social and cultural aspects of college life as well as race influence students' experiences in all facets of higher education. It is essential that the field of music education make an effort to include voices of color in its research, purpose, and approach toward musical understanding and sharing. I will never forget attending the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) conference in 2014 and realizing that I was one of only a handful of African Americans in attendance. It was unsettling because I anticipated seeing a more diverse population of future and current music educators. I have also observed similar populations at conferences such as the Society for Music Teacher Education (SMTE), Arizona Music Educators Association (AMEA), Texas Music Educators Association (TMEA), the Mountain Lake Colloquium (MLC) and The Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic. While organizations like NAfME actively promote inclusive frameworks and practices,<sup>19</sup> many of their activities including their conferences are predominantly White and Euroamerican. For instance, NAfME's mission states, "The mission of the National Association for Music Education is to advance music education by encouraging the study and making of music by all."<sup>20</sup> Given NAfME's passive approach—similar to the colorblindness rationale employed by White professors to excuse themselves from grappling with issues of race—I'm not sure if NAfME's overarching goal will allow for diversity and inclusion to manifest. While I recognize that diversity also includes gender, religion, race, age, profession, and

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.nafme.org/about/position-statements/inclusivity-in-music-education-position-statement/inclusivity-in-music-education/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.nafme.org/about/mission-and-goals/>

expertise, based on this study's data, I suggest that NAFME and organizations such as The Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic and SMTE consider offering scholarships, travel grants, and registration to students of color to contribute to a more diverse population and voices.

The Historically Black College and University National Band Directors Consortium (HBCU-NBDC) is an organization whose purpose is to provide band directors and students from predominately Black institutions opportunities to collaborate and develop strategic plans for success in instrumental music programs (<http://www.hbcu-nbdc.org/index.html>). While the HBCU-NBDC is not an organization that excludes non-HBCU communities, African Americans largely attend its annual meetings. Like NAFME and other spaces that are not predominantly White, the HBCU-NBDC could provide a wealth of knowledge to the students and communities that they serve by inviting voices different than their own.

Taking into consideration my own NAFME experience and those who have encountered similar experiences, including the participants of this study, I suggest that we encourage the participation of all stakeholders in music and music education to attend and participate in research and music conferences. By doing so, instead of feeling as though they should keep to themselves or interact only with people with similar experiences, backgrounds, and expertise, more participants within the field of music will be empowered to share and receive a wider diversity of ideas.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

A vast collection of research investigates the experiences of African Americans in higher education in both HBCUs and PWIs (e.g., Anderson & Freeman, 1977; Felder,

2009; Strayhorn, 2013). A smaller portion of that research examines the experiences of African Americans in music programs in higher education (Bradley, 2007; Koza, 2009). To my knowledge, my study is the only research that investigates the experiences of African American students who have transitioned from an undergraduate music program at an HBCU to a graduate music degree program at a PWI. I believe that the field of music education has an opportunity more than ever to improve learning experiences for students who come from diverse backgrounds.

The music field stands at a crossroads where we have an opportunity to actively seek out information that is readily available to us through the students whom we encounter and the resources that we have at our disposal. It is without question that more research is needed in all facets of African Americans' college experience. While I have illuminated some problematic issues, this research represents only a scratch on a very large and complex surface. We need more research regarding other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). Information about these institutions is available at <http://www2.gse.upenn.edu/cmsi/>.

Initially, I acquired three prospective female participants at the beginning of this study; however, because they chose not to participate, I was not able to acquire their personal accounts of their own transitional experiences. These missing voices are important to further understanding marginalized populations as well as the complexities of intersectionality. I recommend that future research studies seek to examine the perspectives African American females and their experiences of academic, cultural, social, and racial aspects in music programs at HBCUs and PWIs.

Practical recommendations should also accompany the research. Sometimes as researchers we either fail to provide a blueprint to a very complex issue or we offer a complex solution without any accompanying instructions. For my study, I have suggested several practical applications, such as forming partnerships between HBCUs and PWIs, facilitating conversations regarding issues of race and racism, including missing voices in the profession, and encouraging African American students to take a more proactive stance in helping to improve their college experiences. While issues such as racism and academic, cultural, and social inequalities are very complex, as researchers we should consistently seek ways to share with those who encounter the very issues that we meticulously research and publish, and actively demonstrate them in our own practice on a regular basis.

### **Recommendations for African American Students**

African American students must tell their stories. You have a stake in your educational experiences and your voice is essential to improving them. While not all professors, students, and administrators will understand your experiences, you may be able to bring to their attention the issues that prohibit you from not only completing your degree, but also from experiencing what could be one of the most exciting experiences of your life. For instance, after noticing that he was struggling to understand the language employed in his research classes and discussion, Morgan sought out his professors to make them aware of the problem and to seek their assistance to increase his understanding and grade.

While it may be difficult to prove that racism still exists in our current society, it is even more difficult to provide evidence of covert racism due to its subtleness,

particularly within educational structures. Combined, colorblindness and post-racial attitudes and behaviors may discourage many people of color from sharing their stories—at least, that was the case for Denzel.

How do you report something like this in the twenty-first century? People assume that everything is okay for everyone and it's not. Yeah, we've come a long way, but we have so far to go. It's hard to explain to people who don't deal with these things on a daily basis. If you're not Black, you don't really get it.

Like Denzel, other participants who encountered racial opposition did not report their experiences to their professors or administrators. I believe participants had multilayered reasons for not reporting their experiences. Chris stated that if African Americans reported all of their bouts with racism, it would seem almost ludicrous to others because their claims would appear to many Whites as unsubstantiated. He also included that sometimes, Whites perceive Blacks as complaining about racism so, in efforts to not appear as a complainer, some Blacks refrain from speaking up. I believe that all of these rationales for self-silencing are valid; however, I will add that African Americans may also not speak up because their claims may be used against them and because of the ordinariness of their bouts with racism. They know it exists, but in order to not be burdened by their own reality and in efforts to persist or not grow weary, African Americans must sometimes pick and choose battles that will have the biggest impact to influence change. However, this practice may contribute to African Americans desensitizing their own awareness, resulting in their being unaware that they were wronged because of their race. While this is problematic, I am unsure if there is any other way to exist and achieve as an African American in America other than with double consciousness. If there is, my question is, “What is the alternative?”

While seeking help from professors to confront racial behaviors can be more complex and unsettling to report than academic difficulties, these accounts are vital to further improving those areas of education whose progress stem as far back as 1837. As an African American who has navigated through predominantly White educational spaces for most of her life, I can attest that it is not easy. Every space is different, with its own set of challenges. I agree with Denzel that it can be difficult to discuss and also prove that you have been unjustly wronged. However, I suggest finding a professor, administrator, or advisor with whom you have already established a relationship with to inform them of the problem(s) you have encountered during your experience. I believe that finding someone that you trust is the first step to bettering your experience, particularly within a White space. Others may be able to not only offer advice, but to also suggest other networks of people that may be of some assistance. However, if there is no one in your department or field of study with whom you feel comfortable discussing matters, contact your campus student services or Dean of Students. You may also consider contacting a previous professor or mentor who you trust from another experience. They may be able to serve as liaison between you and your current institution in efforts to better facilitate your experience.

While having access to professors or administrators you can trust is a great way to find the help that you need, you may also consider creating a network of students with whom you feel comfortable to discuss complex issues. It has been my experience that sometimes those students who have encountered similar experiences may be found in minority-serving organizations and those where you already have membership. Some organizations include the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA), the College

Division of the National Association for the Advancement of People of Color (NAACP), Phi Mu Alpha (PMA), and Kappa Kappa Psi (KKPsi). Nonetheless, I encourage you to find ways to improve your educational experiences in predominantly White spaces.

While I understand that these suggestions are easier said than done, keep in mind that your voice is important and your peers and professors may not know your experiences unless you share them.

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APPENDIX A  
RECRUITMENT LETTERS

Dear Faculty Member:

I am a graduate student studying with Dr. Margaret Schmidt in the Music Education Department at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to investigate perceptions toward degree perseverance among African Americans who have transitioned from an undergraduate music program at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to graduate music degree programs at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

I am contacting you to ask your help in identifying participants for this study. I am asking that you please forward the attached invitation and contact information to individuals meeting the following criteria:

- 1) Self-identify as African American
- 2) Earned an undergraduate music degree from an HBCU
- 3) Currently enrolled in or already completed a master's degree program in music at a PWI

Participation will involve completion of a brief (10-15 minute) survey and a possible invitation to participate in subsequent interviews. Those interested should contact me using the information below.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at [joyce.mccall@asu.edu](mailto:joyce.mccall@asu.edu) or [Marg.Schmidt@asu.edu](mailto:Marg.Schmidt@asu.edu). If you have any questions regarding participants' rights as in this research, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Joyce M. McCall  
Doctoral Student, Music Education  
School of Music, Herberger Institute  
Arizona State University  
[joyce.mccall@asu.edu](mailto:joyce.mccall@asu.edu)

Positing for the following Facebook pages:

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- HBCUs BandHead, (<https://www.facebook.com/rayshawn.williams.127?fref=ts>)
- Minority Band Directors National Association (MBDNA),  
(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/263961576956562/>)
- Sigma Alpha Iota (<https://www.facebook.com/sigmaalphaiotafraternity>)
- Tau Beta Sigma (<https://www.facebook.com/TauBetaSigma>)
- Kappa Kappa Psi (<https://www.facebook.com/KappaKappaPsi>)
- Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia (<https://www.facebook.com/phimualphasinfonia>)
- Delta Omicron (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Delta-Omicron/21558202025>)

Dear Fellow Facebook Friends,

I am a graduate student studying with Dr. Margaret Schmidt in the Music Education Department at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to investigate perceptions toward degree perseverance among African Americans who have transitioned from an undergraduate music program at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to graduate music degree programs at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

I am contacting you to ask your help in identifying participants for this study. If you meet the following criteria, I invite you to participate:

- 1) Self-identify as African American
- 2) Earned an undergraduate music degree from an HBCU
- 3) Currently enrolled in or already completed a master's degree program in music at a PWI

If you are interested, please contact me at [hbcu2pwi@gmail.com](mailto:hbcu2pwi@gmail.com). Also, I am asking that you please forward this post to others you know who might like to participate.

Your initial participation would involve responding to a short survey (10-15 minutes). You may later be invited to participate in a series of interviews with me to talk about your experiences in college.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: [hbcu2pwi@gmail.com](mailto:hbcu2pwi@gmail.com) or Dr. Schmidt at (480) 965.8277. If you have any questions regarding participants' rights as in this research, you can contact the Chair of the Human

Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Joyce

APPENDIX B  
SURVEY INVITATION

## Degree Perseverance of African Americans Transitioning from a Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to a Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

Dear Prospective Participant:

I am a graduate student studying with Dr. Margaret Schmidt in the Music Education Department at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to investigate perceptions toward perseverance of African Americans who have transitioned from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to graduate music degree programs at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). I am interested in learning about your experiences.

I am inviting your participation in this study, which will involve taking a short survey lasting 10-15 minutes. I am emailing you a link to the survey. The first question on the survey is what is your survey ID code. Please enter this number \_\_\_\_\_ (individual code assigned to each participant by researchers).

Taking the survey indicates your consent to participate in this study. Based on the responses on this survey, I intend to invite participants representing a range of demographics and teaching specialties to participate in four semi-structured interviews. Please only respond to this survey if you are willing to do the follow-up interviews.

In order to protect your confidentiality, your name, the name of your school, and other identifying facts will not be used so that you cannot be recognized as a participant. If used, your responses will be identified only by a code or pseudonym. Once participants for follow-up interviews have been chosen, any information linking your name to your survey will be destroyed. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be eighteen or older to participate in this study. While there are no direct benefits for you if you choose to participate in this study, the data gathered from this research will help inform music education and teacher preparation practices. Your story may also benefit future students who will transition to a PWI. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: [joyce.mccall@asu.edu](mailto:joyce.mccall@asu.edu) or [Margaret.Schmidt@asu.edu](mailto:Margaret.Schmidt@asu.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Filling out the survey will be considered your consent for participating in the study.

Regards,

Joyce M. McCall  
Doctoral Student, Music Education  
School of Music, Herberger Institute  
Arizona State University  
joyce.mccall@asu.edu



APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW INVITATION

## Degree Perseverance of African Americans Transitioning from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

Dear Prospective Participant:

I am a graduate student studying with Dr. Margaret Schmidt in the Music Education Department at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to investigate perceptions toward perseverance of African Americans who have transitioned from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to graduate music degree programs at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). I am interested in learning about your experiences.

I am inviting your participation in this study, which will involve four one-hour interviews over the phone or Skype. You may be invited to share personal artifacts (i.e., transcripts, class papers, pictures, etc.) to gain greater insight into your experiences. All artifacts will be placed in a locked office where only my advisor and I will have access. Following interviews, you will be asked to complete a short 8-10 minute survey. This survey will not be anonymous. After the interviews and surveys are completed, all identifiers will be separated from the data. If you choose to participate, you have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the survey or the interview at any time.

I would like to audiotape our interviews. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. If you decide to participate and do not wish to be taped, please let me know; you also can change your mind after the interview starts. I plan to use my computer to record the interview and save the data as a sound file, which I will transcribe. Sound files will be erased by the end of May 2016. If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me using my contact information below.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be eighteen or older to participate in this study. While there are no direct benefits for you if you choose to participate in this study, the data gathered from this research will help inform music education and teacher preparation practices. Your story may also benefit future students who will transition to a PWI. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

In order to protect your confidentiality, your name, the name of your school, and other identifying facts will not be used so that you cannot be recognized as a participant. If used, your responses will be identified only by a pseudonym. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at: [joyce.mccall@asu.edu](mailto:joyce.mccall@asu.edu) or [Margaret.Schmidt@asu.edu](mailto:Margaret.Schmidt@asu.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you

have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Regards,

Joyce M. McCall  
Doctoral Student, Music Education  
School of Music, Herberger Institute  
Arizona State University  
joyce.mccall@asu.edu

APPENDIX D  
INTERVIEW CONSENT

STUDY TITLE: Degree Perseverance of African Americans Transitioning from  
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to  
Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

Dear Prospective Participant:

Thank you for participating in the initial survey for my research study to investigate perceptions toward perseverance of African Americans who have transitioned from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to graduate music degree programs at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

I am interested in learning more about your experiences and am inviting your participation, in the interview and follow-up survey portion of this study which will involve four interviews conducted over a period of two months, either by telephone or Skype, which will take approximately 60 minutes each. Additionally, there will be a short follow-up survey, expected to take no more than 10 minutes of your time (total of 4 hours & 10 minutes). If you choose to participate in this portion of the study, you have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. You will be encouraged to share artifacts such as grade transcripts, course syllabi, class papers, pictures, etc. Artifacts will be used to gain a greater understanding of your college experiences while transitioning from an HBCU to a PWI. Sharing artifacts is voluntary and you will not be penalized for choosing not to share them.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation. Your responses will be confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

I would like to obtain both an audio and video recording of this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. Signing the following page and returning it to the provided address indicates your consent to be audio and video recorded. You may choose to scan the document and send it or send it through the mail.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team at [joyce.mccall@asu.edu](mailto:joyce.mccall@asu.edu) or [Margaret.Schmidt@asu.edu](mailto:Margaret.Schmidt@asu.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

Please respond to this email if you wish to participate in the interview portion of this study.

---

**Return Address:**

Joyce M. McCall  
Arizona State University  
Box 870405  
Tempe, AZ 85287  
Joyce.mccall@asu.edu

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Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Sign \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## Interview Questions

The following questions formed the basis for four interviews with each participant.

### Interview 1: Background

- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about your family, mom, dad, and siblings, etc.
- Tell me about your childhood.
- Where did you spend your childhood?
- Give me a description of the community you grew up in.
- Were there members of your childhood community that influenced your choices in education? School choice? College choice?
- Any organizations that influenced your choices in education?
- Tell me about your middle school years.
- Of those which were most influential on your life?
- Tell me about your years in high school.
- Of those which were most influential on your life?
- What was your family's view on education? College education?
- Did any of your family go to college and/or have any college experience?
- If so, what college? HBCU? PWI?
- Did your family have any influence on your choice of college?
- How was your relationship with them? Were they supportive, etc.?
- How did you decide to go to college?
- Did anyone influence your choice in college and/or going to college?
- How did you navigate middle school and high school?
- How would you describe your work ethic in middle school and high school? Life prior to undergraduate degree?
- Were and/or are you a member of a religious organizations? During your childhood?
- Did that have any effect on your education? Your life?
- Did you face any obstacles and/or resistance prior to undergrad experience in school, in your community, etc.?
- What motivated you in middle and high school experience? Who motivated you?
- How did you do it?
- Is there any additional information you would like to include?

### Interview Two: Undergraduate experience

- Tell me about the process of choosing to go to college?
- Of choosing and applying to specific college?
- What institution did you attend?
- Why did you choose this school?
- Where is it located?



- Why not a PWI?
- Were there any individuals who influenced your choice?
- What was the response of your family after learning that you would attend this institution?
- How involved were your family in your education?
- Tell me about your very first day on campus.
- How were your classes?
- Describe the demographics of your classes, the school of music, and the campus in regards to the student and faculty population.
- How was the social environment of the campus
- With peers?
- With faculty?
- Did you participate in any social organizations? Music organizations? Religious organization?
- Tell me about your experiences
- Tell me about your relationships
- Any uncomfortable situations? Any forms of hazing?
- Were involved in the community surrounding the institution?
- How did you meet your friends there?
- Describe to me some of things you would engage in.
- How were your relationships like with your peers?
- How were your relationships with faculty?
- Did you work during undergrad? Where? Why?
- How did you pay for college?
- Did you have to work?
- Did your parents help you with expenses?
- How was your relationship with family?
- What did you do during the week to socialize?
- What did you do on the weekends to socialize?
- Did you live on campus? Off campus? With family?
- What was that like? Roommates?
- Describe your roommate situation.
- If you had to do all over, would you have chosen this institution? Why?

#### Interview Three: Graduate Experience

- What institution did you attend?
- Why did you choose this school?
- Where is it located?
- Why not an HBCU?
- Were there any individuals who influenced your choice?
- What was the response of your family after learning that you would attend this institution?

- How involved were your family in your education?
- Tell me about your very first day on campus.
- How were your classes?
- Describe the demographics of your classes, the school of music, and the campus in regards to the student and faculty population.
- How was the social environment of the campus? With peers? With faculty?
- Did you participate in any social organizations? Music organizations? Religious organization?
- Tell me about your experiences.
- Tell me about your relationships.
- Any uncomfortable situations? Any forms of hazing?
- Were you involved in the community surrounding the institution?
- How did you meet your friends there?
- Describe to me some of things you would engage in.
- How were your relationships like with your peers?
- How were your relationships like with faculty?
- Did you work during school? Where? Why?
- Did you have to work?
- How did you pay for college?
- Did your parents help you with expenses?
- How was your relationship with family?
- What did you do during the week to socialize?
- What did you do on the weekends to socialize?
- Did you live on campus? Off campus? With family?
- What was that like? Roommates?
- If you had to do all over, would you have chosen this institution, specifically a PWI? Why?
- All Things Considered
- How would you compare academic, social, and cultural aspects of your experiences between HBCUs and PWIs?
- What/who would you credit your success to?
- If I asked you the day following your completion of your master's "How did you get here? How did you make it?" What would you tell me?
- If you had the entire HBCU community in one room, what would like tell to them? Suggestions? Improvements? Commendations?
- Now let's change the audience in that room to the PWI community, what would you say?
- Do you have any regrets about either institution type?

#### Interview Four: Transitional Experiences

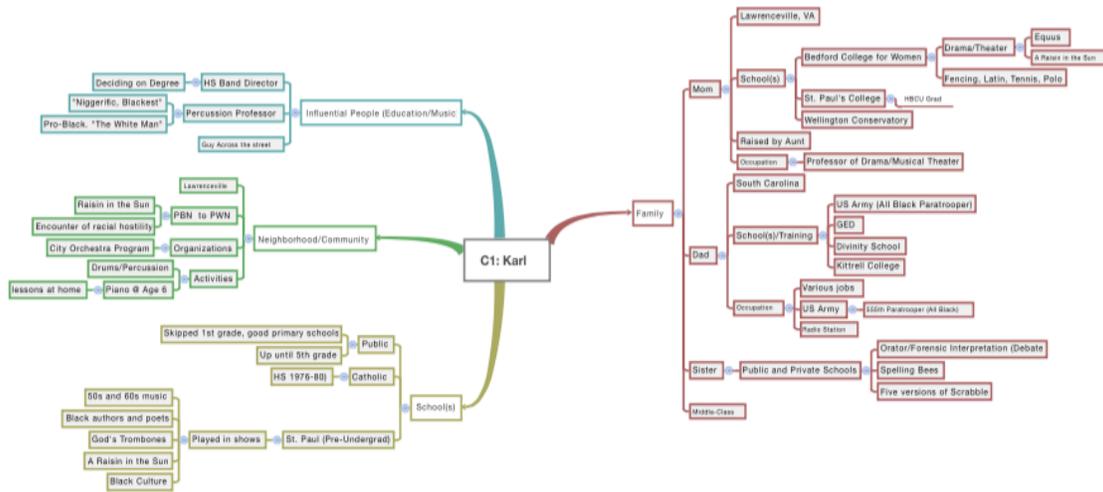
- How would you compare your experiences at your HBCU and PWI?
- What/who would you credit your success to?

- How did you make it?
- If had the opportunity to speak to the faculty, staff, students, and administrators at your HBCU in one room, what would you say to them? In regards to your experience? Improvement? What about your PWI? What would you say to them?

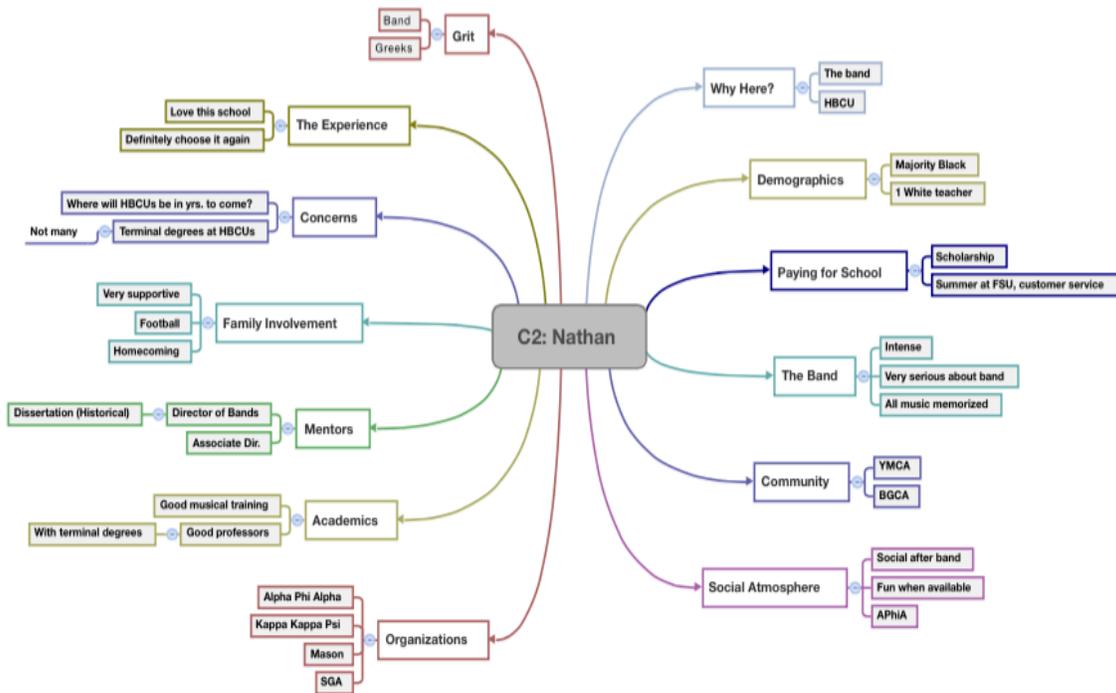
APPENDIX F  
SAMPLE MAPS AND CODES

# Conceptual Maps

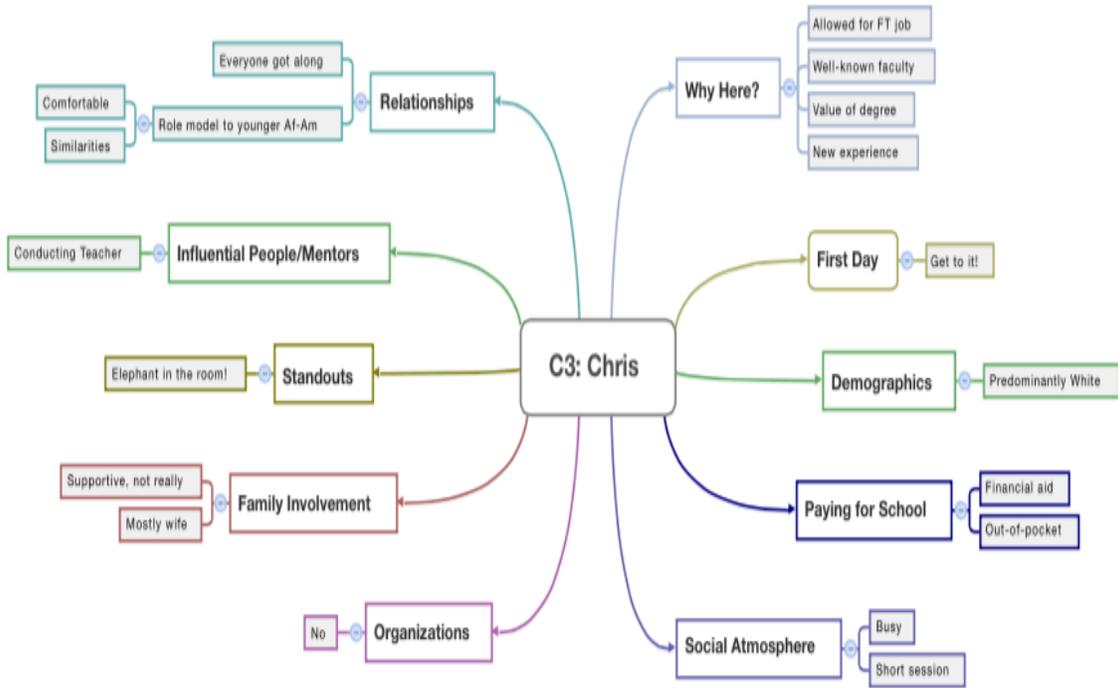
## Interview One



## Interview Two



# Interview Three

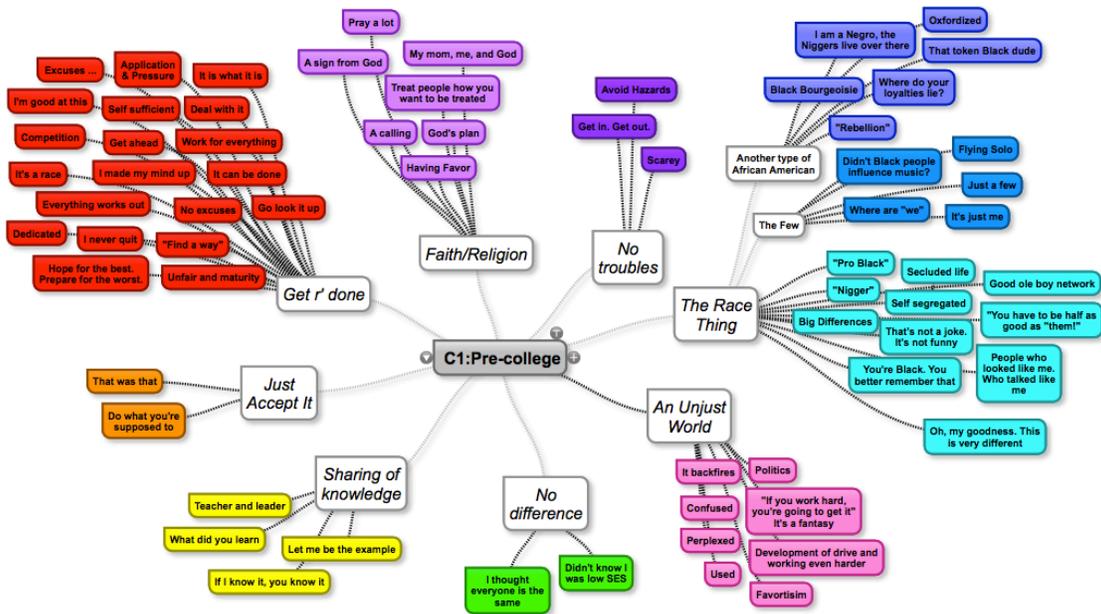


Interview Four



## Codes

### Inductive Codes



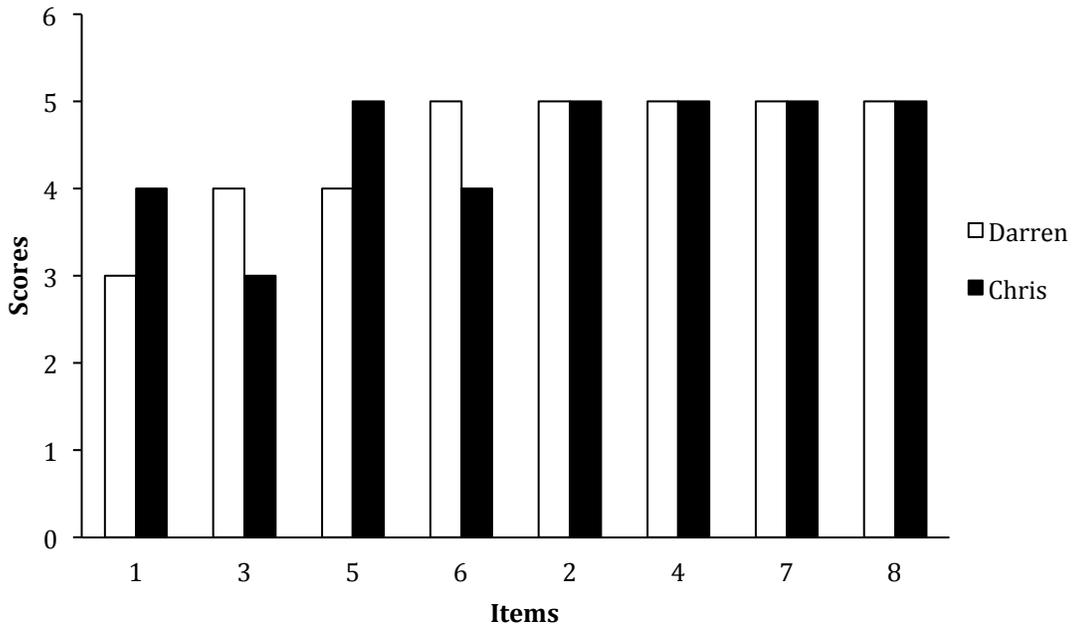
### A priori Codes

- 1) Cultural capital – CC
- 2) Community cultural wealth – CCW
  - a. Aspirational capital, AC
  - b. Familial capital, FC
  - c. Linguistic capital, LC
  - d. Navigational capital, NC
  - e. Resistant capital, RC
  - f. Social capital, SC
- 3) Double consciousness – DC

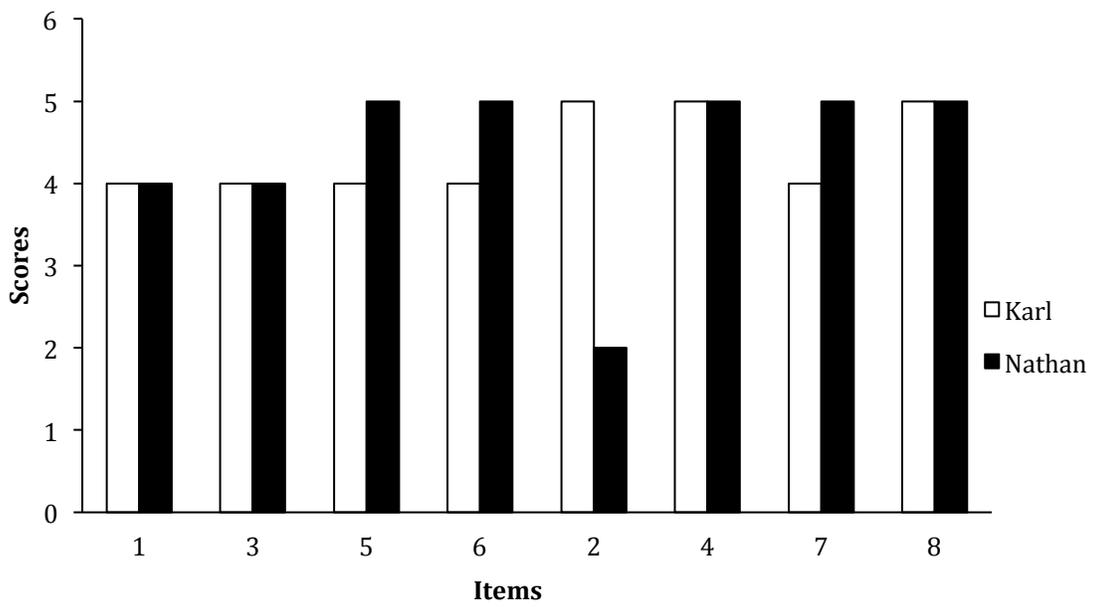


APPENDIX G

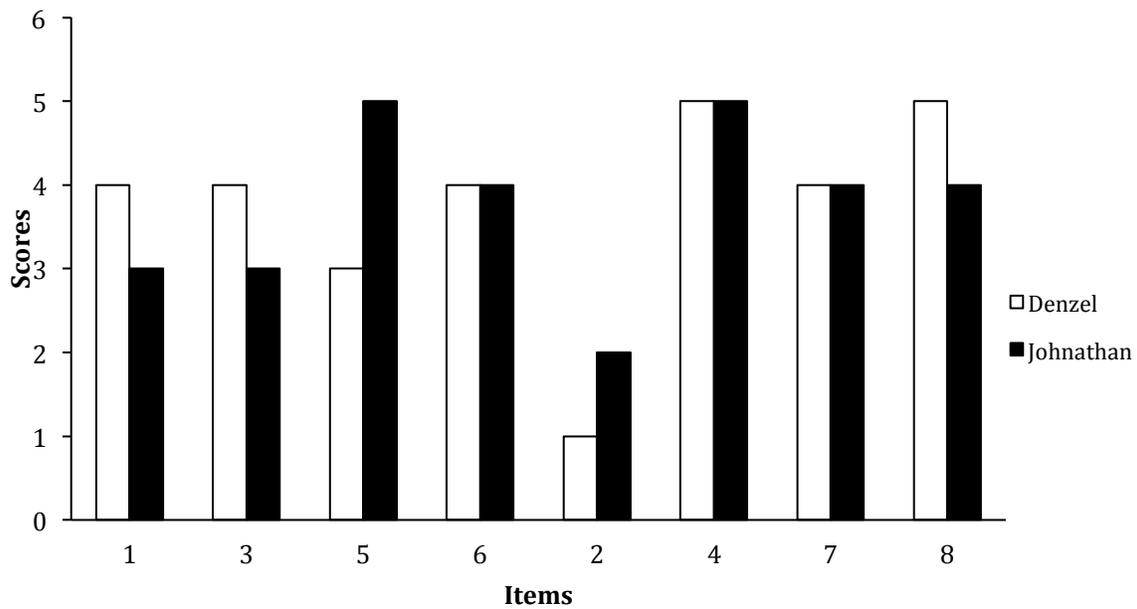
PARTICIPANT GRIT SCORE COMPARISON



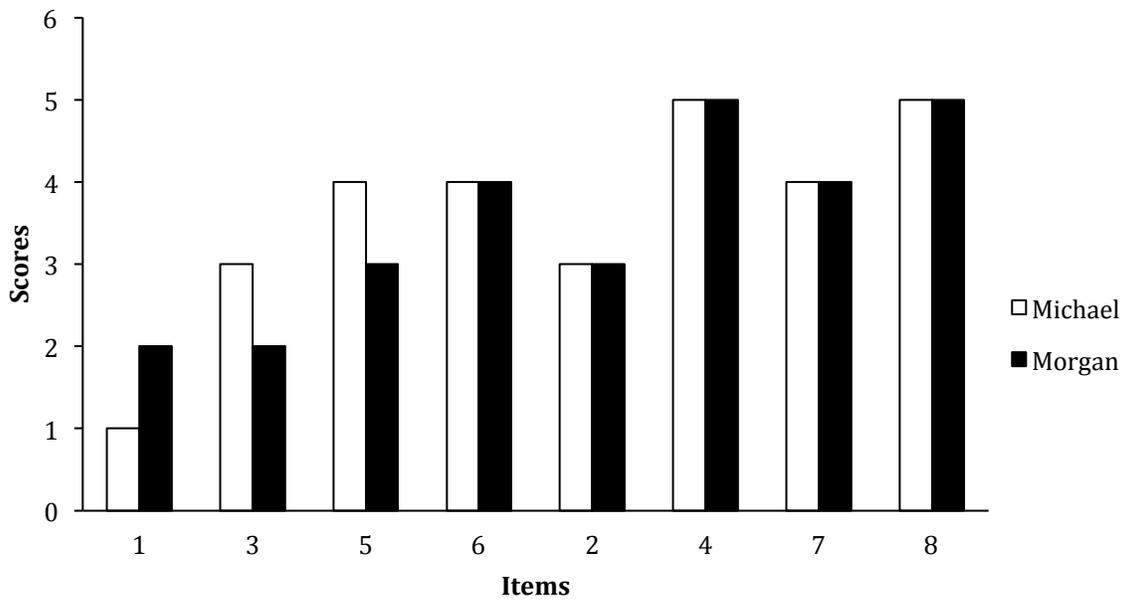
Darren's and Chris' Responses



Karl's and Nathan's Responses



Denzel's and Johnathan's Responses



Michael's and Morgan's Responses

APPENDIX H  
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

[Edit this form](#)

# African Americans' Perceptions Toward Perseverance Survey No. 1

Taking this survey indicates your consent to participate in this study.

\* Required

**Survey ID code \***

This is a required question

**1. Age \***

**2. How do you identify yourself? Check all that apply. \***

- Black
- African American
- Negro
- Black and African American
- African American and Negro
- Other:

**3. Why do you prefer that designation? \***

**4. Gender \***

- Male
- Female
- Other:

**5. What identity best describes your role in music? Check all that apply. \***

- Band Director
- Choir/Vocal Director
- Orchestra Director
- General Music
- Music Technology
- Other:

**6. What setting best describes the neighborhood you grew up in? \***

- Rural
- Urban
- Suburban
- Other:

**7. What economic status best describes your current status? \***

- Upper
- Middle
- Lower
- Other:

**8. What socioeconomic status best describes you/your family's socioeconomic status during your undergraduate experience? \***

- Upper
- Middle
- Lower
- Other:

**9. What socioeconomic status best describes you/your family's socioeconomic status during your master's experience? \***

Upper

Middle

Lower

Other:

**10. What HBCU did you attend for your undergraduate music degree? \***

**11. What year did you begin your undergraduate degree? \***

**12. What year did you finish your undergraduate degree? \***

**13. What PWI did you attend for your master's music degree? \***

**14. What year did you begin your master's degree? \***

**15. What year did you finish your master's degree? \***

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APPENDIX I  
GRIT SURVEY



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# African Americans' Perceptions Toward Perseverance Survey No. 2

Here are a number of statements that may or may not apply to you. For the most accurate score, when responding, think of how you compare to most people -- not just the people you know well, but most people in the world. There are no right or wrong answers, so just answer honestly!

\* Required

**1. New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones. \***

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

**2. Setbacks don't discourage me. \***

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like at all

**3. I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost**

**interest. \***

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

**4. I am a hard worker \***

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

**5. I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one. \***

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

**6. I have a difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete. \***

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

**7. I finish whatever I start. \***

- Very much like me

- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

**8. I am diligent. \***

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me.
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

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100%: You made it.



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APPENDIX J  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

research.integrity@asu.edu  
To: <Marg.Schmidt@asu.edu>  
Reply-To: <research.integrity@asu.edu>  
Study STUDY00000386 is approved

December 30, 2013 12:35 PM

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Template:IRB\_T\_Post-Review\_Approved

### Notification of Approval

**To:** Margaret Schmidt

**Link:** [STUDY00000386](#)

**P.I.:** Margaret Schmidt

**Title:** Transitioning from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

**Description:** This submission has been approved. You can access the correspondence letter using the following link:

[Correspondence\\_for\\_STUDY00000386.pdf\(0.01\)](#)

To review additional details, click the link above to access the project workspace.