THE RESILIENCY OF BLACK GRADUATE STUDENTS AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

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Dissertation Defense

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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BLACK GRADUATE STUDENTS' RESILIENCY

The undersigned, appointed by the Associate Vice Chancellor of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, have examined the dissertation entitled

THE RESILIENCY OF BLACK GRADUATE STUDENTS AT PREDOMINANTLY

WHITE INSTITUTIONS

presented by Jason McKinney,

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Professor Ty-Ron Douglas

Professor Kevin Brown

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents. My loving mother, Rosie McKinney and father, Dr. Warren McKinney Jr. Although they are no longer here, their prayers are still at work.

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ABSTRACT

Being a graduate student is challenging due to the new knowledge and practices one must learn to become a professional in their chosen area of study. However, being a Black graduate student at a predominantly White institution (PWI) increases these challenges due to the mismatch between the Black student's community cultural wealth and the cultural capital valued by PWI colleges and universities (Adsitt, 2017). Historically, higher education has been not very welcoming to Black students; Black students are visible in advertisements for sporting events for football or basketball, or if a race issue arises on campus (Steele, 1989). White culture's publications and memorabilia often promote pictures of White students with a few minority students to illustrate they understand diversity from a cultural race perspective. This discordance is one of the key reasons why I, as a Black graduate student, often question whether I am intelligent and durable enough for acceptance and to complete a Ph.D. My own experiences as a graduate student, along with personal life challenges and my resiliency to press forward, birthed this research topic.

This study explores the resiliency of Black graduate students at PWIs in correlation to the equity and diversity issues they confront and their personal life experiences within the institutions' broader social and cultural contexts. It highlights issues of overlapping racism, inequality, and the power culture of Whiteness as it pertains to the inclusion of minority students in PWIs. I present various elements of the resiliency rooted within Black graduate students of the past 200 years, examining historical court cases that illustrated the racism and inequality the students confronted, thereby fueling their need to be resilient to obtain educational access in America. Traditionally, resiliency

demonstrates one's ability to overcome a challenge or traumatic event in life, such as 9/11 or recovering from an illness such as cancer; however, this research factors in the challenge of being Black, explicitly being a successful Black graduate student at a PWI.

Utilizing Yosso's (2005) Cultural Wealth Model for this study gives a critical lens into how Black graduate students persist through higher education and fuel their resiliency. Yosso designed this model to capture the talents, strengths, and experiences Black graduate students bring with them to their college environment. I interviewed nine Black graduate students via Zoom Video Conferencing. The participants attended universities in various regions of the United States: five participants in the Midwest; one each in the Northern, Eastern, and Southern Regions; and two in the West.

Several essential findings came from the study. For instance, the six cultural capitals can work independently sometimes, or all of them can work at once, simultaneously, without a moment's notice. The Black graduate students featured in this study showed that just because one person may have a positive experience from aspirational capital or navigational capital, another may have negative results. Nevertheless, this study highlights the ups and downs within the Black graduate student's life, that we can be resilient by valuing who we are from a cultural and intellectual perspective. It amplifies the narrative that predominately White institutions needs to respect and value our cultural wealth and cultural knowledge equally to their own!

Chapter 1: Introduction

Being a graduate student is challenging due to the new knowledge and practices one must learn to become a professional in their chosen area of study. However, being a Black graduate student at a predominantly White institution (PWI) increases these challenges due to the mismatch between the Black student's community cultural wealth and the cultural capital valued by PWI colleges and universities (Adsitt, 2017). This discordance is one of the key reasons why I, as a Black graduate student, often question whether I am intelligent and strong enough for acceptance and to complete a Ph.D. My own experiences as a graduate student, along with personal life challenges and my resiliency to press forward, birthed this research topic.

Historically, higher education has been not very welcoming to Black students; Black students are visible in advertisements for sporting events for football or basketball, or if a race issue arises on campus (Steele, 1989). White culture's publications and memorabilia often promote pictures of White students with a few minority students to illustrate they understand diversity from a cultural race perspective. However, real-life campus experiences typically lack the equity and diversity portrayed in university marketing. Diversity activities are limited and often are linked to social and cultural holidays or months, for example, February for Black history (Banks, 2002). Elements of Black culture have been appropriated for decades and integrated into social norms via pop culture and music without giving proper credit to those who created and developed these products. Sadly, the United States education system is not much different than pop culture or music. The system acknowledges only those elements of Black culture that can easily be appropriated by the dominant White culture; it is structured to secure Whiteness within our social interactions, educational norms, and pedagogy (Debord & Miller, 1993). The current structure highlights overlapping racism, inequality, and the "power culture"

of Whiteness as it pertains to the inclusion of minority students in PWIs. To understand this

issue, one must view it from a historical perspective.

This study explores the resiliency of Black graduate students at PWIs in correlation to the

equity and diversity issues they confront and their personal life experiences within the

institutions' broader social and cultural contexts. It highlights issues of overlapping racism,

inequality, and the power culture of Whiteness as it pertains to the inclusion of minority students

in PWIs.

Research Questions

This research study considers the following questions within the social and cultural

contexts that Black graduate students face on PWI campuses.

1. How do Black graduate students persist through higher education?

2. What develops and fuels the resiliency of Black graduate students amid the various

   struggles they face?

Overview of the Issues

The issues Black graduate students currently face are not new. They stem from a

historical context in which Black students' experiences and resiliency were shaped by the

construction and social development of America's pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 (PK–12)

system as well as the higher education system (Karabel, 2005). In Chapter 2, I present various

elements of the resiliency rooted within Black graduate students of the past 200 years, examining

historical court cases that illustrated the racism and inequality the students confronted, thereby

fueling their need to be resilient to obtain educational access in America. Access to higher

education has improved for Black graduate students over time, but their ability to succeed

continues to be a critical challenge. Strayhorn (2012) stated, "A fair amount of research has

shown that sense of belonging also is associated with numerous positive, prosocial, and productive outcomes in specific domains such as education" (p. 9). PWIs regularly advertise their willingness to increase minority enrollment, whereby Black students can gain access to higher education, but the institutions do not truly value Black culture as part of the package deal (Iverson, 2007).

Research from Williamson (1999) has suggested that Black students need to know that their intellectual property and well-being are valued as much as their peers. The same research found that the further a Black student advances in higher education, the greater the need for academic and social acceptance. This need for acceptance relates to the imposter syndrome, which I have experienced at times, doubting my skills or wondering if I am viewed as a scholar. However, even though some Black graduate students struggle for acceptance, others are indeed welcomed into the PWI culture. Harper, Patton, and Wooden (2009) affirmed that a few African Americans are offered access to the socioeconomic advantages associated with college degree attainment (p. 390). The gaps between the experience of some Black graduate students and others possibly reflect the different narratives each group is living and the positive or negative affirmations the groups are receiving concerning their abilities, access, and social connections to higher education as well as economic and social success on and off the college campus. Navigating through higher education can be a challenge, especially when a student feels like they are the only one concerned about their current status, current course load, and where they may land in the future, all of which is commonly experienced by a Black graduate student and increases the challenges of the student at a PWI.

Transitioning into graduate school gives some Blacks the impression they must code-switch and hide their Blackness, training themselves to be White to be accepted by the majority

rather than being proud of their culture and skin. According to Stewart (2008), there are multiple identities a Black student must acquire during their higher education journey, as they negotiate when to implement their culture's knowledge rather than applying the White camouflage they deem necessary to interact and gain intellectual and social value within the classroom and in social gatherings on predominantly White campuses. Staying true to one's culture while ensuring one's message comes across in a scholarly manner can be difficult, especially for Black students. Williamson (1999) spoke to the impact of code-switching, and the struggle Black undergraduate students endure as they strive for recognition at PWIs while not losing a sense of who they are from a cultural and personal perspective. Porter and Dean (2015) believed it is important for Black students to value who they are and know their intellectual properties are good enough, useful not only for their academic development but also for structuring and developing their career despite the biases. Therefore, I express myself through my cultural language, as it describes parts of my lived experiences, while the sociocultural construction of higher education does not value these terms in the same manner I do.

Accordingly, this study explores the resiliency of Black graduate students at PWIs in correlation to the equity and diversity issues they confront and their personal life experiences within the institutions' social and cultural contexts. It highlights issues of overlapping racism, inequality, and the power culture of Whiteness as it pertains to the inclusion of minority students in PWIs. This research is needed to improve the higher education experience for minority students, students from both the United States and other countries. Enhancing the experiences of minority students is likely to increase the population of such students in higher education, making PWIs more diverse and giving academic leaders a better understanding of how to structure a university's social and cultural settings in a more welcoming and inclusive manner,

both in words and action. This study employs Yosso's (2005) Cultural Wealth Model to evaluate

the social structure of PWIs and the value of Black graduate students' cultural wealth and

cultural knowledge in comparison to their White peers.

Statement of the Problem

Since the establishment of PWIs, White culture has shaped the social structure of higher

education; the way students, administrators, and faculty interact with one another; and the

development of curricula (Peterkin, 2010). Over time, other cultures and races have gained

access to education and attended these educational hubs of American society, but are they truly

welcome?

Many higher education institutions do not address many of the challenges facing Black

students until a situation or issue occurs that attracts negative attention, impacting the

university's image and its brand as an educational business. Bolman and Deal (2013) stated, "An

institution of higher education is judged by the age, size, and beauty of the campus, the amount

of its endowment, its faculty–student ratio, and the number of professors who received

doctorates from prestigious institutions" (p. 291). Cultural diversity and equality on PWI

campuses are not at the forefront unless they impact people's perceptions of the institutions.

Black graduate students' intellects and culturally specific contributions to the university

community are only accepted if they align with the objectives of the university and higher

education. A Black graduate student attending a PWI has a difficult line to walk, as they must

adapt to the culture of higher education, their campus's social structure, its White culture, and the

language of higher education, all to gain access to scholarships, internships, and experiences in

teaching and publishing that can a lead to a career. With a shortage of Black faculty and

administrators to view as mentors, students face even more segregation (Bonner et al., 2015).

Research from Lilly et al. (2018) revealed that segregation-related challenges illustrate the lack of acceptance, mentorship, and self-esteem some Black graduate students experience, all of which impact how they view their intellectual capabilities. Without a support system, many Black graduate students give up their academic dreams and career goals, as their will to press forward is extinguished. Brown (2008) states, "research suggests that Black American social support networks may provide Black Americans with additional tools for coping, which can promote resiliency" (p. 35), thereby emphasizing the importance of developing a support-system community that values the Black graduate student's academic capabilities along with their cultural wealth and knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

Utilizing Yosso's (2005) Cultural Wealth Model for this study gives a critical lens into how Black graduate students persist through higher education and fuel their resiliency. Moreover, Yosso's model identifies components of resiliency needed to overcome the challenges faced by Black graduate students attending PWIs. Brown (2008) stated, "In order to have a true understanding of Black American resiliency and racial socialization, it is important that we examine these constructs at various developmental levels" (p. 36). Therefore, by incorporating elements of the Black graduate's cultural knowledge and academic experiences, this study investigates the social structures, both past and present, that have shaped each student's current attitudes and actions in the face of institutional racism. The aim is to offer a clearer understanding of the evolution of their resiliency over time and the role it has played in their life.

Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model

Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model is the perfect connector to view and value Black graduate students' resiliency. Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model includes

six types of capital that are essential to Black students who are persistent in their attempts to

complete the *p–20* academic pipeline. The p-20 academic pipeline involves the educational links

between PK–12 schooling and higher education, from bachelor to doctoral degrees (the 13th–20th

year of school). Yosso designed this model to capture the talents, strengths, and experiences that

Black students bring with them to their college environment. The six components of Yosso's

Community Cultural Wealth Model are aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and

resistance capital (defined in Chapter 2, in the section titled "Overview of the Theoretical

Framework: Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model "). Each is essential to a Black

graduate student's development of their resiliency, as their experience and knowledge elevate

their ability to utilize these cultural tools to develop an academic self-concept of themselves as

productive students within the structure of a PWI. It is essential for Black students to have

support systems outside of their own culture, such as staff and peers from other cultures. Yosso's

model illustrates the importance of the six types of capital and how they can be utilized not only

for the benefit of Black students but also for the benefit of the educational system. Next, I define

resiliency in relation to Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model and the focus of my

dissertation.

Defining Resiliency

Traditionally, resiliency illustrates one's ability to overcome a challenge or traumatic

event in life, such as 9/11 or recovering from an illness such as cancer; however, this research

factors in the challenge of being Black, specifically being a successful Black graduate student at

a PWI. According to Sideroff (2015), "resilience is about returning to a ready state of calm focus

after the activating event is over, rather than continuing the activation when it is no longer

necessary" (p. 188). Historically, the research on resiliency has explored the general impact of

biological and psychosocial risk factors, stressful life events, and protective factors in early and middle childhood and late adolescence (Werner, 1989, p. 72). However, according to Brown (2008), these studies have often examined overcoming major events or illnesses, neglecting the impact of culture and race in social and educational contexts, especially if the color of one's skin is the traumatic event. Black culture throughout America's history has illustrated that resiliency is overcoming the challenges that have prevented a person from being valued equally and as a human capable of obtaining knowledge and developing new concepts of knowledge to be shared with others. Utilizing a qualitative method, such as the one this study employs, to demonstrate and share Black graduate students' experiences of resiliency is the best way to ensure their stories are viewed as data and factual evidence and therefore the best way to bring about change.

Research Methods

Qualitative research plays as a stage for the voice of participants amplifing their stories/ experiences and allows the researcher to connect with both readers and participants on an intimate level as the narrators describing their thoughts and feelings, which is why narrative inquiry (O'Sullivan, 2015) and Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) (Kim, 2016)—the methodologies selected for this study—are perfect for capturing Black graduate students' experiences. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers should utilize reflexivity to offer an analysis within a setting based on human belief structures, reflecting a human's cause and effect components. All Black graduate students on PWI campuses may have similar stories, but each one's life experiences may be slightly different due to the structure of their university, the location, and the reality of the experience in which they have lived (Chase, 2010). Due to these similarities and differences, a linear but iterative process is needed, ensuring all data collected is valued and viewed equally with integrity, which SPN achieves.

SPN is specifically organized around themes, issues, and constructs that couple personal experience with a broader worldview; narrative inquiry examines the relationship between the life stories of individuals within the research and the life stories of other people who share characteristics with the research participants (Kim, 2016).

Data Collection

The number of participants in this study was 10, nine Black graduate students, and I. Two participants I knew from educational conferences. The American Education Research Association (AERA), Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), and Critical Race Studies in Education Association (CRSEA). Four participants were peers at the University of Missouri. I developed a friendship with two participants from universities on the East and West coast who were members of a research team involving Mizzou's campus. Utilizing Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model provided me with a method to connect with them as fellow Black graduate students, building trust in this research partnership. Incorporating an interview protocol designed to yield data, and ultimately answer the research questions, clarified how some Black graduate students are resilient at PWIs. (See Appendix B.) Each interview felt like two friends talking about their experiences as Black graduate students at a PWI, without any of the effects of the higher education jargon. The follow-up questions focused on the "how" as a researcher/ participant have a friendly conversation, and then following up with research-oriented questions ensured the data collection was organic and truthful (Riessman, 2008). Their responses to the initial research questions guided the follow-up questions. Furthermore, I gathered information from my participants before the interview with a pre-interview questionnaire, which further strengthened the interview process and data collection. (See Appendix A)

Limitations and Assumptions

Throughout the study, I considered how my epistemology and life experiences impact data collection and analysis, as narrative research contemplates the value of the participants' stories and experiences in their organic form. The social constructionist viewpoint is that all narratives are located within the intersection of history, biography, and society. I am a Black graduate student studying Black graduate students with similar experiences and stories, and several of them I know personally. Taking all of this into account could raise issues of trustworthiness (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, in Chapter 3, I provide an in-depth research positionality statement in which I offered transparency regarding my objectives and personal connections to the topic, participants, and intended use of the results. Consequently, being a Black graduate student gives me insight that a non-Black researcher would not be able to share fully with the participants on their same level.

Another limitation may come from the difficulties of interpreting the narratives of the participants. Narrative inquiry begins with the expression of lived and told stories. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), narrative inquiry symbolizes theoretical ideas about the educational experience as stories. Moreover, the narrative form is utilized in educational research as a way of organizing human experiences, since humans lead storied lives individually and share their narratives socially in written and verbal recitations. Data saturation is a tool I utilized to ensure enough information is presented in the study while staying true to the voice and value of the participants' experiences in the process. For example, all my participants shared similarities in the importance of having a sense of belonging, the importance of knowing who they are as a Black graduate student and the need to code switch. However, everyone

experienced these events differently, but the struggles, challenges and personal experiences situations within their stories were familiar enough they all connect.

Significance of the Study

The research for this study derives from many conversations held with Black graduate students about their cultural and personal experiences, which have sparked the desire to research the resiliency of Black graduate students and our ability to be successful at PWIs. The qualitative methodology I have chosen is narrative inquiry, which best explores the research questions in ways that reach the participants at a level that reveals their resiliency techniques. Each students' success at a PWI will illustrate the importance of valuing Black graduate students' cultural wealth and cultural knowledge equally to their White peers within the PWI's social and cultural structures.

In turn, the overarching aim of this study is to understand and share the experiences of Black graduate students facing various challenges with the intent of bridging theory with social and cultural change. Findings from the study are expected to have strong implications for research, practice, and institutional reform. In addition to changing perceptions about Black graduate students, this study can alter PWIs' ability to offer and develop support, remove barriers, and increase degree completion for Black students, enhancing the future impact that PWIs have on student's wealth accumulation and job placement. Moreover, it is important for future generations of minority students to envision themselves as resilient college graduates through my participants' personal narratives.

Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced my study by presenting a snapshot of the historical challenges Black graduate students have encountered at PWIs and within American society, as

well as the importance of being accepted and the vital role that social and community support

play in the lives of Black graduate students. In the next chapter, I present a brief historical

perspective of the social and cultural impacts that racism, slavery, and the lack of acceptance and

value have had on the Black community and their educational experiences in the U.S. At the

same time, I illustrate their resiliency to overcome impossible odds within society and education.

Definition of Key Terms

Black/African American – One who identifies as Black culturally and genealogical links

to Africa, and African American refers to a Black person born in America, and are descendants

of enslaved Africans by America over 400 years ago.

P–20 – The p-20 academic pipeline involves the educational links between PK–12

schooling and higher education, from bachelor to doctoral degrees (the 13th–20th year of school).

Predominantly White Institution (PWI) – The majority of the university's or college's

population (faculty, student body, and administrators) is White.

Resiliency – Traditionally, resiliency illustrates one's ability to overcome a challenge or

traumatic event in life, such as 9/11 or recovering from an illness such as cancer; however, this

research factors in the challenge of being Black, specifically being a successful Black graduate

student at a PWI. Black culture throughout America's history has illustrated that resiliency is

overcoming the challenges that have prevented a person from being valued equally and as a

human capable of obtaining knowledge and developing new concepts of knowledge to be shared

with others.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I provide a review of the historical circumstances, empirical literature, and theories that frame this study. The organization of this chapter consists of five sections, with each attending to the idea of resiliency. First, to situate this study of the resilient experiences of Black graduate students within the historical context, the literature review begins with a very brief overview of Black education in the United States, exploring how slaves resiliently transitioned to citizenship through schooling. Second, the section titled "Historical Context of Blacks in U.S. Higher Education" examines the multiple policies and practices implemented within America's educational system that affected African Americans' equal access to higher education. Third, this chapter reviews what we know and do not know about Blacks' current experiences in U.S. graduate degree programs, their resiliency, and higher education's larger struggles to embrace diversity. Fourth, by reviewing these areas of study, I argue that graduate degree programs and the extant research lack a deep understanding of the importance of Black student culture. Fifth, I summarize Yosso's (2006) Community Cultural Wealth Model as the theoretical framework that supports this exploration of Black graduate students' experiences in graduate degree programs. Through this review, I argue that we must explore the experiences and resiliency of Black students in higher education.

A Brief History of Blacks in U.S. Education: From Slave to Citizen

The resiliency of the Black[1] (African-American) community today links back to the enslavement of our ancestors, as they endured much but remained strong through adverse, very

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[1] I use the terms Black and African American interchangeably in this dissertation, as some individuals refer to themselves as Black while others say African American, depending or their heritage. However, some prefer Black American because they grow up with strong roots tied to what they call the Black American experience.

grievous times. Viewed as less than human, they continued to thrive and develop themselves in a

new land within an unfamiliar society—a society not designed for them to function or be viewed

as people, let alone enjoy the ability to learn and teach (Hardesty, 2016). According to Perry and

Steele (2004), if slaves were found striving to educate themselves by reading and writing, they

received beatings from the slave masters with cowhides or cat-o'-nine-tails and, if caught again,

they would lose digits from their hand. Despite these challenges, the African slaves remained

strong and resilient, often learning how to read fully knowing the wrath of their slave masters.

However, they knew that education served a greater purpose if they survived. For the slaves,

literacy was more than a symbol of freedom; it was freedom as Williams (2005) states:

> "The presence of literate slaves threatened to give lie to the entire system. Reading
>
> indicated to the world that this so-called property had a mind, and writing foretold the
>
> ability to construct an alternative narrative about bondage itself. Literacy among slaves
>
> would expose slavery, and masters knew it" (Location No. 270).

Therefore, the slaves who could read shared their knowledge by teaching others in secret,

empowering their community. The slave masters only valued the slaves' bodies as labor

equipment; they did not consider slaves capable of having an intellect. Literate slaves informed

others of the various revolts against slavery that occurred throughout the South, as they were able

to read newspapers and give vital information to those who were unaware of events occurring

throughout the nation (Perry & Steele, 2004). In 1787, a bill passed in the U.S. House of

Representatives to value every Black slave as three-fifths of a person, which was a means to gain

power in the House by southern states. Valued as farming equipment to some degree, the slaves

did not receive any of the benefits their labor created in the White culture (Horton & Horton,

2005). The bill excluded them from gaining access to education, along with the possibility of

being an equal citizen of the United States during these times. However, some slaves did not

allow this logic to dampen their ability to be something greater than what the slave masters

perceived them to be (Williams, 2005).

Frederick Douglass is a great example of the resiliency some slaves possessed in their

pursuit of freedom and equality; Douglass himself focused on becoming a free man. Sophia

Auld, the slave master's wife, taught Douglass how to read and write, but Hugh Auld believed it

was a waste of time, stating, "education would spoil a nigger, make him unfit to be a slave, make

him discontent, unhappy, and unmanageable" (Perry & Steele, 2004, p. 14). As time moved

forward, the Black slaves obtained freedom, but the words of Hugh Auld's ideology remained as

new policies and practices sustained this illogical perspective, and the 1890s marked the decisive

onset of Jim Crow in the South. However, Douglass' determination to develop his writing and

reading skills empowered him to become a social reformer, abolitionist, orator, author, and

preacher, believing that these tools would enable him to write himself a pass, to escape become

free. He strove to be free not only in the physical sense but also from an intellectual perspective,

and he became a model figure for others to carry on the equal rights movement (Perry & Steele,

2004).

Along the way, Blacks received access to the educational system but were still not

regarded as equals to their White peers from an intellectual standpoint. Despite the many

challenges within the educational system, the African-American student has been resilient

throughout, and the fight still goes on (Spring, 2013). Some research suggests Blacks were

granted access to higher education at some educational institutions as early as 1799, 64 years

before the abolishment of slavery in 1865, as discussed in the next section.

Historical Context of Blacks in U.S. Higher Education

It is vital to understand the historical context of Black students' experiences to situate their need to be resilient within the US PK–12 and higher education systems (Karabel, 2005). In this section, I discuss various elements of the resiliency of Black graduate students of the past 200 years and present court cases that illustrate the need of Black students to be resilient to obtain educational access in America. It is necessary to understand the historical context and resiliency needed to access PK–12 educational systems, first, in order to understand Black student's access to higher education and graduate school. Historically, access to higher education for Black students often resulted in struggles and resistance (Anderson, 1988). Although access and entry have improved for Black graduate students over time, their ability to be successful continues to be a critical challenge. However, some Black students throughout history were resilient in their desire to gain educational knowledge beyond PK–12, as historical research of African Americans in higher education illustrates. Despite the challenges they faced from socioeconomic and human-equality perspectives due to the color of their skin, they persevered.

Major Achievements in Black Higher Education: A Historical Timeline

The website titled *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (n.d.) has developed a timeline that presents the higher education achievements of Blacks. It begins several decades before the Emancipation Proclamation, as the first event occurred in 1799. Despite negative narratives involving social constructs and negative perceptions of their intellectual ability, deeming their value as less than that of White citizens, several Blacks were able to break the negative stereotypes placed upon them through slavery. They obtained degrees from prestigious universities such as Yale and became important figures in the development of medicine and technology before gaining equal rights or being viewed as citizens. The list in Table 1 illustrates

some of the great achievements of Black individuals in the United States during times of racial

oppression and discrimination. This list demonstrates the resiliency of Blacks obtaining higher

education from 1799–1876 and is drawn directly from the web page "Key Events in Black

Higher Education" (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, n.d.).

Table 1. A Historical Timeline of Achievements in Black Higher Education

Year	Event
1799	John Chavis, a Presbyterian minister, is the first Black person on record to attend an American college or university. There is no record of his receiving a degree from what is now Washington and Lee University in Lexington.
1823	Alexander Lucius Twilight becomes the first known African American to graduate from a college in the United States. He receives a bachelor's degree from Middlebury College in Vermont.
1826	Edward Jones graduates from Amherst College. Jones is believed to be the second African American to earn a college degree. Two weeks after Edward Jones graduated from Amherst College, John Brown Russwurm graduates from Bowdoin College in Maine. He is the third African American to graduate from college in the United States of America.
1828	Edward Mitchell graduates from Dartmouth College. He is believed to be the fourth African American to graduate from an American college.
1833	Oberlin College in Ohio is founded. From its founding, the college is open to Blacks and women and has a long history of dedication to African-American higher education.
1836	Isaiah G. DeGrasse receives a bachelor's degree from Newark College (now the University of Delaware). DeGrasse is recognized as the first African American to graduate from any of the flagship state universities.
1837	What is now Cheyney University in Pennsylvania is established for free Blacks. It does not become a degree-granting institution until 1932.
	James McCune Smith is the first African American to earn a medical degree after he graduates from the University of Glasgow in Scotland. Smith returned to the United States to be a physician. He also owned two pharmacies.
1844	Oberlin College graduates its first Black student, George B. Vashon, who goes on to become one of the founding professors at Howard University.
1849	Charles L. Reason is named professor of belles letters, Greek, Latin, and French at New York Central College in McGrawville, New York. Reason is recognized

	as the first African American to teach at a mixed-race institution of higher education in the United States.
1850	Lucy Ann Stanton, a Black woman, receives a certificate in literature from Oberlin College. She is a graduate of the college but does not receive a bachelor's degree. In that same year, Harvard Medical School accepts its first three Black students, one of whom is Martin Delany. However, Harvard later rescinds the invitations due to pressure from White students.
1855	Kentucky's Berea College is established, becoming the first interracial and coeducational institution in the South.
1856	Martin Henry Freeman becomes the first Black college president at Avery College.
1864	The first Black female medical student, Rebecca Lee, graduates from the New England Female Medical College.
1865	Before the end of the Civil War, approximately 40 Blacks had graduated from colleges and universities, all of which were in the North. Patrick Francis Healy is the first American Black to receive a doctorate, earning a Ph.D. from Louvain University in Belgium.
1872	Charlotte Ray graduates from Howard University Law School in Washington, DC, becoming the first African-American woman to do so.
1874	Patrick Francis Healy, a former slave who passed for White, is named the president of Georgetown University, the first Black at any predominantly White higher education institution in the United States. Edward Bouchet, the son of a university janitor, graduates summa cum laude from Yale College.
1876	Edward Bouchet becomes the first Black to earn a Ph.D. at an American university. He received his doctorate in physics from Yale.

Note. From the website of the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (n.d.).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities. These Black scholars' achievements

paved the way by illustrating Blacks have the ability and intellectual capacity to be great thinkers

and productive citizens within America's social and economic culture, which is the main

objective of higher education. According to Geiger (2014), higher education has aspired to

provide access to the most advanced learning of an age. Such learning implies a distinctive

culture that marks educated persons and prepares them for respected positions in society (p. xii).

Because of and in spite of the negative labels and the devaluation slavery placed on Blacks due

to the color of their skin, their achievements were profound. The Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1890

expanded the Morrill Land-Grant of 1862. The 1890 law gave states an option to allow Blacks

into institutions of higher learning or build schools for Blacks only, leading to the development

of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). In universities established by former

slaves, Blacks once again illustrated their resiliency and ability to be more than what society

believed them to be (Anderson, 1988).

The first HBCU was Cheyney University of Pennsylvania in 1837. It was followed by the

University of the District of Columbia in 1851, Harris-Stowe University in 1857, Fisk University in

1867, and Howard University in 1868 (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, n.d.). Through the

development of HBCUs, Black cultural wealth and cultural knowledge were valued and

celebrated while the narratives of some former slave masters and the deeply ingrained societal

perspectives of Blacks being ignorant and lazy were confronted and changed (Williams, 2005).

While Table 1 illustrates the achievements Black scholars made within PWIs, it was through the

process of former slaves developing HBCUs that Blacks became more fully valued as human

beings with civil rights and more fully recognized as educational scholars. Today, Black

graduate students stand upon the shoulders of those who broke barriers and developed a culture

of resilience and determination to disprove the negative social and educational perceptions about

Blacks' intellectual and social abilities.

Sadly, the achievements of these historical giants still did not significantly change how

the United States at large contemporaneously viewed and valued the importance of embracing

Blacks within American culture and society (Anderson, Race-Conscious Educational Policies

Versus a "Color-Blind Constitution": A Historical Perspective, 2007). Nevertheless, many

Blacks obtained educational success and contributed to the betterment of society, even though

they were not viewed as citizens. Before1896, there were no federal laws that hindered Blacks in

obtaining education from a segregated university or educational institution, but the Supreme

Court's decision in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case (1896) segregated not just education but society

as a whole, separating Blacks and their social and economic value within America's culture, as

further discussed in the next section.

Legal Cases Related to Educational Access and Social Acceptance

       Plessy v. Ferguson (1896).

      In 1892, a man by the name of Homer A. Plessy was arrested for not leaving a railroad

car designated for White passengers, although he was light-skinned and "1/8 Black" and could

have passed for White. According to *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), Plessy's attorneys challenged

the charges, arguing the Separate Car Act infringed on Plessy's Thirteenth and Fourteenth

Amendment rights. However, John H. Ferguson, a judge of the Criminal District Court for the

parish of New Orleans, viewed African Americans differently than Whites in similar situations

based on railroad boundaries. Plessy's lawyers were striving to further the freedoms of African

Americans and to confer equal access to them, but the Supreme Court's verdict in 1896 favored

Ferguson and legitimized a regime of White Supremacy throughout the country that affected

every part of social life, not just railroad travel (Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896). According to

Stoskopf (2002), the decision permitted the growth of a system of state and local legislation

known as "Jim Crow" laws, establishing racial barriers throughout American society that

mandated, among other things, that Black and White Americans could not publicly sit, drink, or

eat side by side (p. 65).

      The U.S. Supreme Court decision protected Whiteness by denying the right of Plessy to

claim Whiteness as property, even though he could pass as a White man, stating:

If he is a White man and assigned to a colored coach, he may have his action for

damages against the company for being deprived of his so-called property. Upon

the other hand, if he is a man of color and be so assigned, he has been deprived of

no property, since he is not lawfully entitled to the reputation of being a White

man. (Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896)

This Supreme Court decision only corrected part of the 1857 Dred Scott decision in which Chief

Justice Roger Taney expressed no Black man born free or slave has access to citizenship per the

United States Constitution (Dred Scott v. Sandford, 1854). The *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision

reinforced the country's "separate but equal" doctrine by incorporating some of the tenets of the

Jim Crow laws established in the 1880s through the 1950s. The Jim Crow laws defined the terms

and conditions of what constitutes separate but equal within American society, impacting local

and federal facilities and schools. According to Alexander (2012), few found it surprising that

Jim Crow laws arose following the collapse of slavery. Most history books describe the laws as

regrettable but predictable, given the virulent racism that gripped the South and the political

dynamics of the time (p. 21). Through these challenges, the resiliency of the Black community

was once again tested but from a much broader position, as African Americans did not gain

access to full citizenship until the mid-1950s to late 1960s after federal voting rights were

accessible to all citizen through the Civil Rights Acts.

The court's findings in *Plessy v. Ferguson* affected the U.S. education system, further

hindering the educational and economic advancement of the African-American student and

citizen, as the Supreme Court failed to define what constitutes equal facilities and what is

reasonable (Spring, 2013). Despite having proficient Black educators, the African-American

schools operated within the social construct of inequality: less funding, deteriorating buildings,

and limited educational resources. However, four higher education court cases challenged the

discrepancies within the separate-but-equal policies, all of them leading up to the 1954 *Brown v.*

Board of Education of Topeka case and, some believe, changing the landscape of American

education. These four cases are discussed in turn in the next section.

Legal Cases Related to Higher Education

      ***Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938).**

      This case challenged the state of Missouri policies that denied Black students' access to

the state law schools and encouraged them to attend neighboring states' law schools. Missouri

law prohibited attendance of Blacks and Whites at the same educational institution while

universities in four connecting states allowed non-resident Black students access to their law

schools. According to *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938), the United States Supreme

Court did not see the logic in Missouri's actions and, in a 6–2 decision, concluded:

      The basic consideration is not as to what sort of opportunities other States

      provide, or whether they are as good as those in Missouri, but as to what

      opportunities Missouri itself furnishes to White students and denies to Negroes

      solely upon the ground of color. (p. 349)

      The case established that states must ensure that Black students have equivalent access to

higher education in all colleges in each state, forcing the state of Missouri to provide a law-

school education for both Black and White students within the state. This ruling upheld the

segregation of students based on their race, though. The Missouri legislature allocated $200,000

to Lincoln University to provide a law school for Black students, but it was not on par with the

law school at the University of Missouri. By September 1939, the makeshift law school housed

30 Black law students in a former cosmetic school aligned with a movie theater. Through these

unequal and unethical practices, the Missouri legislature ensured that Lincoln University's law school did not rise to the level of the University of Missouri law school.

These actions caused Gaines to return to the Missouri Supreme Court, which sent Gaines' case back to the United States Supreme Court for a judgment on the equality of facilities. Gaines never made it to the second round of litigation, leaving the constitutional perspective of the sperate-but-equal language unresolved (Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada, 1938). It was not until 1950 that the University of Missouri allowed Black students to enroll at the university. The resiliency to advance in higher education after the tragic story of Lloyd Gaines illustrates the drive these Black students had despite the pushback from PWIs and the social construct within America against Blacks attending predominantly White universities.

Sipuel v. Board of Regents (1948).

Nine years after the Gaines case, a similar case developed at the University of Oklahoma's law school concerning admittance based on race. Denied enrollment solely based on her race by both the district and the Oklahoma Supreme Court, Ada Lois Sipuel attended Langston University, an HBCU, and graduated with honors. Sipuel's intellectual value was discriminated against due to race, but her determination and resiliency were strong, and she appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The attorney for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Thurgood Marshall, represented Sipuel, proposing the high court reexamine the legal concept of separate but equal through a constitutional lens. According to court records, Marshall argued segregation has no logical or justified place in higher education, and the effects of segregation impacted those without equal access to achieve the American dream (Sipuel v. Board of Regents, 1948).

Four days after the closing arguments, the Supreme Court released their verdict, basing their decision heavily on the 1938 *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* case (1938). The high court's response, composed in a three-paragraph per curiam opinion, was for the state of Oklahoma and the University of Oklahoma to develop a school of law for Ada Sipuel equivalent to the current college at the University of Oklahoma. As a result, their ruling failed to allow Sipuel to become a student at the University of Oklahoma's law school. Notes from Connell (2009) stated, "Upon remand, the district court directed university authorities to either admit Sipuel to its law school, open a separate law school for her, or close the White law school until it opened one for Blacks" (p. 949). The Board of Regents quickly developed a makeshift law school for Ada in a closed-off section of the state capital building, assigning three law school professors to instruct her until they completed the development of a new law school for Black students in Langston. However, Ada was enrolled at the University of Oklahoma's law school eight months after the development of the law school for Blacks, as she was its only law student. She graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1951 (Connell, 2009).

Sweatt v. Painter (1950).

The University of Oklahoma and the University of Missouri were not the only higher education institutions denying Blacks access to their law schools. The University of Texas denied Heman Marion Sweatt entry into their law program two years before Ada Sipuel. Sweatt strived to obtain a mandamus[2] to argue his right to admission, and although the court believed the state of Texas denied Sweatt's constitutional right of equal protection by denying him a legal

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[2] A mandamus is an order to a public agency or governmental body to perform an act required by law when it has neglected or refused to do so. A person may petition for a writ of mandamus when an official has refused to fulfill a legal obligation, such as ordering an agency to release public records.

education, they did not want to desegregate the university (Connell, 2009, p. 950). Like the state

of Oklahoma, the Texas courts prolonged the trial long enough for the state to develop a law

school at an HBCU state university rather than granting Sweatt admission to the University of

Texas law school. In turn, Sweatt refused to attend based on the inequality of the newly

developed law school for Blacks (Sweatt v. Painter, 1950). The Texas court's actions were

extraordinarily like the actions of the Missouri court, illustrating the overwhelming racist

perspectives some states and universities held of Black students and their ability to function

equally in higher education. The courts' actions also showed the depths they would go to ensure

the education system remained segregated and imbalanced. However, Sweatt's drive to obtain

his goals fueled him to appeal his case to the United States Supreme Court.

Sweatt's resiliency paid off; the Supreme Court noticed the educational inequality

between the White and Black law students attending Texas institutions, giving an unfair

advantage to, and favoring White students. The state of Texas and the University of Texas were

ordered by the Supreme Court to admit Sweatt into the law school. According to Connell (2009),

this was the first time the Supreme Court compelled the admission of a Black student to a school

previously maintained only for White students on the grounds that the separate schools were

unequal (p. 950).

McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents (**1950**).

The case is unique as it involves the University of Oklahoma College of Education,

where the previous cases involved law schools. The plaintiff was a former Black professor

named George W. McLaurin who was equipped with a master's degree and applied for entry into

a doctoral of education program at the University of Oklahoma in 1947 and 1948. Once again,

the University of Oklahoma denied another Black student access solely based on their race.

According to Connell (2009), McLaurin sought and received injunctive relief; the district court

ruled that it was unconstitutional for an Oklahoma statute to make it a misdemeanor to maintain

a school at which Blacks and Whites were enrolled together. Black students were permitted to

attend institutions of higher learning by the Oklahoma legislature amendment but on a

segregated basis, thus separating them from their White peers and silencing their intellectual

abilities.

McLaurin was admitted to the University of Oklahoma as a graduate student but was

required to sit separately from his classmates in an adjoining room, thus limiting his ability to

engage and learn from class discussions. These parameters of limited, segregated access also

affected his ability to use the library, cafeteria, and other elements of the university. These

measures impacted his ability to fully function as a doctoral student due to the lack of interaction

and collaborative access provided to him by the university solely based on his race. The

University of Oklahoma did not transfer what they learned from the *Sipuel v. Board of Regents*

(1948) case and continued to impose their racist perspective within their university's policies.

According to Connell (2009), McLaurin tried to have these conditions removed, but the district

court denied his efforts. However, after appealing, the Supreme Court found these conditions

hindered McLaurin's ability to succeed academically and violated his equal education rights. The

U.S. Supreme Court made this statement before issuing their decision:

> We conclude that the conditions under which this appellant is required to receive
>
> his education deprive him of his personal and present right to the equal protection
>
> of the laws. We hold that under these circumstances the Fourteenth Amendment
>
> precludes differences in treatment by the state based upon race. Appellant, having
>
> been admitted to a state-supported graduate school, must receive the same

treatment at the hands of the state as students of other races and reversed the

lower courts judgment. (McLaurin versus University of Oklahoma, 1950, p. 518)

The McLaurin case was a vital piece to the developing argument against segregation in

higher education in the United States, and the ruling strengthened the argument that previous

court decisions—those that allowed separate-but-equal policies—enabled segregation and had a

negative impact on Black students in America's educational system. In the next section, I review

literature that shows the long-lasting effects of segregation and demonstrates that lack of access

still exists for Black students in higher education, even after these past judicial victories.

Contemporary Black Students in Higher Education

Black students' experiences within education in the United States has been one of

struggle, as stated earlier in this chapter. Historically, higher education was designed for White

men (Peterkin, (2010), and never truly valued or embraced Black culture nor valued Blacks'

intellectual capabilities as equal to White's. Research conducted in the 1970s by Davis (1970)

reported that, by the end of their undergraduate career and before entering graduate school, many

Black students experience some form of racism that impacts their perception of higher

educations' social structure, thus making them vulnerable. The demands of graduate school

coupled with the stress of everyday life only exacerbated those feelings (p. 194).

The Influence of Black Graduate Students' PK–12 Experiences

The PK–12 educational experiences of Black graduate students can have a profound

effect on their view of education or, specifically, higher education. The goal is often to graduate

from high school and attend college. But many of the experiences of Black students in the PK–

12 environment do not align with this narrative (Spring, 2013). Yes, many successful Black

students go on to attend college, but their views of their abilities can be negatively affected by

their experiences in their PK–12 careers, during which they lacked a sense of belonging

(Strayhorn T. L., 2012). Black students often develop a sense of alienation by constantly having

to adapt and code-switch through various situations in PK–12 environments that may be directly

or indirectly hostile due to the color of their skin or the cultures or communities in which they

live (Stewart, 2008). These experiences often transfer into the students' views of how education

in America sees them, views that encompass higher education. The following figure 1 illustrates

how these and many other elements can negatively affect the Black student's ability to become a

Black graduate student.

Disparities in Degree Attainment by Black and White Adults in the United States

Figure 1Figure 1, from the Education Trust (Nichols & Schak, 2017), illustrates the

percentage difference in the attainment of education between Black and White adults in 2016,

ranging from less than high school degrees to graduate degrees. The gap is 5.6% in the

attainment of graduate degrees, with 7.8% of Blacks attaining graduate degrees as opposed to

13.4% of Whites. There is an even larger gap in Black adults' attainment of bachelor's degrees,

as the gap between Blacks and Whites is nearly 10%. Of the Black adults who obtain post-high-

school degrees of some sort, 30% obtain them during the 25–34 age range, and the percentage

peaks during ages 35–44; however, White adults' percentages are 20% higher during ages 25–

34, and the gap decreases in the 35–44 age range to 15% (Nichols & Schak, 2017).
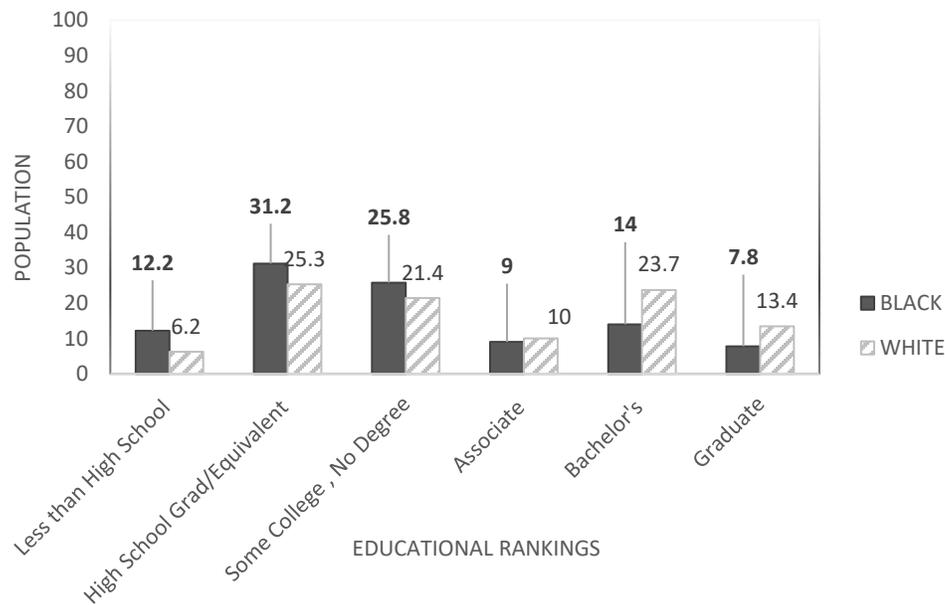
Figure 1. Percentage of Black and White Adults Who Earned a Given Degree,

2016

Among White adults, 47.1% earned some form of college degree (i.e., an associate degree or

more) in 2016, compared to 30.8% of Black adults with only half as many Blacks obtain

graduate degrees as Whites, illustrating the education gap has remained large long after the

courts ruled segregation in education to be illegal.

Nichols and Schak (2017) suggested that degree attainment for Black adults, from a

national perspective, illustrates the disparities between higher education access and entry for

minorities when compared to Whites; degree attainment also reflects the economic structure

within the United States, as Black and Latino populations increase and outpace the White

population and older White workers leave the workforce. The educational gaps between Black

and Latino populations and their White peers are still wide and vary from state to state (p. 1).

Sense of Belonging

Although Lilly et al.'s (2018) research took place over 40 years after Davis' (1970)

research, the results are very similar. Lilly et al.'s (2018) research showed that Black graduate

students feel isolated, marginalized, and quieted by the racial bias from some White peers and

faculty members. Similarly, Kateman and Frisby (2014) theorized that there is a disconnect

between what PWIs endorse and what their African-American students experience when

institutions of higher education sell brand attributes of culture and diversity. These brand

attributes are often connected to sports rather than drawing on the students' love for math or

science. Debord (1993) reported that, when Black students are accepted to various PWIs, they

have a hard time feeling part of the university's community. These students regularly encounter

racism on and off campus, which Harper (2012) defined as "individual actions, both intentional

and unconscious, that engender marginalization and inflict varying degrees of harm on

minoritized persons; structures that determine and cyclically remanufacture racial inequity; and

institutional norms that sustain White privilege and permit [their] ongoing subordination" (p. 10).

Related to these issues, the following sections review the research literature regarding Black

students' sense of belonging, segregation, identity, and resiliency, as well as the lack of

resiliency research related to Black students. The sections review the impact these elements have

on the Black graduate student's need and ability to be resilient, after which the end of this

chapter gives an overview of this study's theoretical framework: the Community Cultural Wealth

Model crafted by Yosso (2005).

Maslow (1962) posited that belongingness is a universal need that everyone desires, and

satisfying this need adds stress to a higher-order need; the need for understanding, safety, love,

and various forms of esteem must be satisfied before an individual can attain what the

psychologist called self-actualization. In addition, this psychological perspective includes higher

education, and Black graduate students feel the need to belong. According to Strayhorn (2012), a

sense of belonging is a key element in the structure of student success in higher education.

Students want to be a part of their university community and participate in culture-building

events, such as sporting events, concerts, and pep rallies; they believe that to belong is to be a

part of the university's culture and valued as a member (Tovar & Simon, 2010).

      Many PWIs do not openly reflect the various cultures they serve unless racial or anti-

culture issues are brought to light; then, they highlight or showcase their "love" for diversity and

the value Black students bring to institutions (Kezar & Eckel, 2008). An example is the response

the University of Missouri issued during protests in 2015 led by a group called Concerned

Students 1950. The university displayed images of The Mizzou Black Men's Initiative (MBMI)

on the homepage of its website to illustrate university leaders' commitment to diversity; it was

the first time the organization had been advertised even though it had been active for years.

Sadly, most PWIs wait until a racially-based situation arises to show in some form that their

Black student population belongs, instead of celebrating the students every day for what their

culture adds to the social structure of the university. Strayhorn (2012) stated, "A fair amount of

research has shown that sense of belonging also is associated with numerous positive, prosocial,

and productive outcomes in specific domains such as education" (p. 9). Research from

Williamson (1999) amplifies this statement, suggesting that Black students need to know that

their intellectual property and well-being are valued as much as their peers. The same research

showed that the further a Black student advances in higher education, the greater the need for

academic and social acceptance. However, Harper, Patton, and Wooden (2009) affirmed that a

few African Americans are offered access to the socioeconomic advantages associated with

college degree attainment (p. 390).

These gaps between the experience of some Black graduate students and others possibly

reflect the different narratives each group is living and the positive or negative affirmations the

groups are receiving concerning their abilities, access, and social connections to higher education

as well as economic and social success on and off the college campus. Harper (2012) asserted

that examining the common experiences of Black students at PWIs can be characterized as

Onlyness, "niggering," [3] and racial microaggressions; these institutions lack Black faculty who

can be role models to these developing scholars. According to Lilly et al. (2018), the lack of

social acceptance within the social structure of the campus enhances microaggressions, leading

students to drink and feel low self-esteem. Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram, and Platt

(2011) define Onlyness as "the psycho-emotional burden of having to strategically navigate a

racially politicized space occupied by few peers, role models, and guardians from one's same

racial-ethnic group" (p. 190). Navigating through higher education can be a challenge, especially

when a student feels like they are the only one concerned about their current status, current

course load, and where they may land in the future; these challenges are compounded for Black

students at PWIs.

Strayhorn and Terrell (2012) described many of the political and social issues Black

students face while transitioning from high school to higher education at PWIs, when they are

striving to find their sense of belonging in social structures that do not reflect them from an

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[3] "Niggering," in the context of microaggressions and as defined by Harper **Invalid source specified.** is the process
where the stereotypes of African Americans "shape people's low expectations for their success in schools and
society" **Invalid source specified.**.

academic or faculty perspective, nor the cities in which they live. However, what is lacking is the impact these issues could have on students who desire to further their educational journey by attending graduate school. Would these same challenges impact a student's ability to complete their bachelor's degree and move forward to obtain a master's or Ph.D. in the long run? Moreover, how do the issues faced in the high-school-to-college transition influence a Black student's ability (or inability) to view themselves as an academic success even when they are maintaining good grades?

Segregation Cloaked as Challenge

The challenge of knowing if they belong is a common trend for any undergraduate student at the beginning of their higher education journey, according to Strayhorn (2012). In contrast, most White students connect with the social atmosphere of the campus culture; the majority of the facility and student body is similar to their own. However, many Black undergraduate students feel a disconnect because the social and cultural makeup of the university often does not reflect or acknowledge race from an intellectual and common perspective, unless it is Black history month or football season. These challenges resemble segregation indirectly (Iverson, 2007). The next section illustrates how race and culture are presented as challenges but are actually elements of segregation.

Racial Identity and Culture

Transitioning into graduate school gives some Black graduate students the impression they must code-switch and hide their Blackness, training themselves to be White to be accepted by the majority rather than being proud of their culture and skin. According to Stewart (2008), there are multiple identities a Black student must acquire during their higher education journey, as they negotiate when to implement their culture's knowledge rather than applying the White

camouflage they deem necessary to interact and gain intellectual and social value within the classroom and in social gatherings on predominantly White campuses. Williamson (1999) speaks to the impact of code-switching and the struggle Black undergraduate students endure as they strive for recognition at PWIs while not losing a sense of who they are from a cultural and personal perspective. Code-switching can make a student feel like they are impersonating another individual, hiding their true self to avoid being exposed. Porter and Dean (2015) stated that it is important for Black students to value who they are and know their intellectual properties are good enough, useful not only for their academic development but also for structuring and developing their career despite the biases they might face. Williamson (1999) proclaimed that Black students should not alienate their culture to achieve academic and social success, thus forgetting who they are as individuals. However, the narrative illustrated within society is that Black culture is only appreciated at certain activities associated with it, such as dance, football, basketball, or soccer.

The push and pull to both camouflage and embrace their culture is often challenging for Black students as they strive to gain social acceptance in an atmosphere that does not often publicize and praise the intellectual property of Black students but instead praises their athleticism and musical talents. According to White and Fulton (2015), some Black students who are familiar with exclusion from their elementary and high school experiences reported being better able to accept the culture on their college campus and move forward, while others continued to feel hurt by the exclusion that followed them into their higher education career (p. 171). In addition, Black students are scrutinized differently based on their gender. However, Harper and Davis (2012) suggested some Black male students are aware of the educational inequities yet care about education based on three themes in their findings: "(1) awareness of

educational inequities, (2) beliefs in education as the great equalizer, and (3) purposeful pursuits

of the Ph.D. in education" (Harper & Davis, 2012, p. 111) . Porter and Dean (2015) proclaimed

that many Black female students have a similar perspective on education as an equalizer, but

they believe the view society has of them, as well as their identity, is very different from their

Black male peers.

Black female students at PWIs often adopt a specific identity or mechanisms of identity,

which they indirectly must accept to find success or attain a certain level of acceptance and

recognition among their White peers and faculty (Harris-Hasan, 2014). Higher education is

constructed on racism, privilege, and marginalization, and Black females must navigate how they

identify and inject their identity in the substructures of society when their social actions and

choices are evaluated by their White peers (White & Fulton, 2015). Research by Winkle-Wagner

(2009) on Black female students at a Midwest PWI revealed that they were "coerced, forced, or

persuaded to accept identity characteristics . . . [because] choice is constrained to the point where

aspects of one's identity are ultimately unchosen" (p. 153). Institutionally constructed identities

consist of hairstyles, dress, and social circles, and social views that do not align are questioned

and marked as undesirable.

In addition to navigating these social constructs and the perception of self, the research

illustrates how many Black female students are forced to code-switch their identities. According

to Porter and Dean (2015), some Black female students resist and place value in their identity,

voice, and culture despite the biased perspectives toward their culture and stereotypes of Black

women's social conduct.

> Sometimes you are the only African American in the workplace or the classroom,
>
> and in your mind, you think 'I am going to be perceived as the angry Black

woman.' However, sometimes, you just have to tell yourself, 'I will say what I

have to say, even if people are not going to be so open to it.' (Porter & Dean,

2015, p. 134)

Intensifying this phenomenon are the lived experiences of many Black female students,

battling inside their minds about how they will navigate through various situations and if their

actions will be perceived as being either "too White" or "too ghetto" to be accepted in various

social circles. Sadly, these challenges do not end after undergraduate studies; they only become

more complex for a Black graduate student. Since higher education administrations do not

address many of the challenges that Black undergraduate students face, these experiences may

transfer into their graduate studies. The diversity of faculty members remains low as the students

enter graduate school and adjust to the culture of the university and social structure of the

campus; they lack the navigational skills to express their experiences in real time (Taylor,

Chatters, Hardison, & Riley, 2001). However, as Black graduate students, their intellects and

ability to express themselves in a certain manner gain acceptance if they align with the objectives

of the university and higher education as a whole (Harper S. R., 2012). Some universities

embrace social justice, students' diverse perspectives on scholarly knowledge, and the lenses

through which the students view the world; still, the original narrative of education securing

Whiteness is alive and dominant for the majority of the higher education system. Veal, Bull, and

Miller's (2012) research illustrated how students are good at picking up environmental clues and

focused on nursing students to demonstrate how there is a limited number of minority graduate

students and minority faculty to teach them. Also, their research highlighted how faculty

members and administrators in the medical and education fields interact with diverse groups of

students from different cultures and races, reinforcing the need to efficiently value and support

their students equally. White and Fulton (2015) emphasized the importance of diversity among

graduate students, administrators, and faculty alike.

Moreover, Debord and Miller (1993) argued that it is important to value equally Black

graduate students' intellectual property equally and that of their White peers, rather than

developing exclusive race programs that feed the myth of inferiority among Blacks students.

Such negative narratives and perspective illustrate the importance of valuing Black students as

equals and ensuring the students receive support and mentorship in the process. According to

Iverson (2007), some researchers believe exclusive race awards indirectly undermine the

students' self-esteem; the students perceive the programs and awards as an implicit

acknowledgment that they are incapable of competing with their White peers on equal footing.

Steele (1989) supported this view, stating "Black students and White administrators have slowly

engineered machinery of separation that, in the name of cultural difference, redraws the ugly

lines of segregation" (p. 55). This machinery of separation further complicates the challenges

Black students face; therefore, it is essential for Black students to have a support system that

develops their resiliency and strengthens their perceptions that they are on equal footing to their

peers, no matter their race or sociocultural background.

Black Student Resiliency in Higher Education

It is important to understand the value of support from family, friends, and mentors as

one strives to be a successful adult. Strayhorn (2012) stated that Black students in higher

education need similar support but often lack mentors that look like them or social structures that

are developed to provide encouragement or remind them of home. Research has found that it is

important for students to support one another in their endeavors to achieve their academic goals,

by encouraging one another to be resilient despite the lack of support by some administrators and

faculty (Brown, 2008). The more support a student has, the more their chances of remaining in

school and obtaining their degree increase. Harper (2012) stated that, although some parents

have little or no firsthand experience with higher education, they cultivate within their children a

belief that college is the only allowable next step after high school (p. 11). Many of these

concepts are carried over into the students' actions and perceptions of higher education; they

view post-high-school education as a task they must complete to become successful.

Some Black students obtain their resiliency not just from their home structure but also

from the attitudes of various communities and cultures that have a "never say die" mentality

(Perry & Steele, 2004). Black students strive to recreate the community they had at home by

connecting with other Black students. The social support networks of African Americans are

based on cultural patterns that have contributed to their ability to overcome adversity (Pipes-

McAdoo, 2002). Through these social support networks, Black students encourage one another,

in a sense supporting the resiliency within the student to study and stay focused on completing

the program. According to Brown (2008), for some Black students, receiving support from

individuals who are not the immediate family can also play a vital role in a student's resiliency.

Various individuals outside of the nuclear family who might be a part of their support system

could include members of local churches or other community-based services and programs.

Moreover, Black students regularly have role models or other adults in the community

that they trust who are not related to them but play key or positive roles in their lives, referring to

them as auntie, cousin, and uncle and treating them as nuclear-family substitutes (Taylor,

Chatters, Hardison, & Riley, 2001). A Black student's church family often consists of people

who serve as role models and healers of their emotional anguish. These additional sources of

support in their social network may be the difference between succeeding or falling victim to

their circumstances (Brown, 2008). According to Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, and Nickerson (2002), these key factors, along with a sense of pride from a cultural perspective, empower Black students to press forward, especially those students who know their history and understand how it can promote racial identity development and positive cognitive and socioemotional outcomes.

Lack of Resiliency Research Concerning Black Graduate Students

The resiliency of Black graduate students at PWIs is often overshadowed by the negative narratives associated with Black students. Higher education faculty members and administrators view Black graduate students through a deficit lens, rather than learning from the students' personal experiences, valuing their journies to success, and incorporating similar models to support others. The need to understand Black students' stories, as well as the value of applying these stories to higher education policies and practices, is why this study is important. For example, there is some research on Black male graduate students' experiences from the P–20 perspective (e.g., Brown, 2008; Debord & Miller, 1993; and Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009), but this research does not incorporate personal narratives. Furthermore, the perspectives of Black female graduate students have not received much research attention, according to Howard (1989). Conversely, plenty of research exists on Black undergraduate students, largely focused on males (e.g., Harper, 2013; Strayhorn, 2012), but their undergraduate experiences have not been assessed from a personal view nor has the research examined how these experiences influence their decisions to attend graduate school (Kim-Prieto, Copeland, Hopson, Simmons, & Leibowitz, 2013).

However, when a Black student obtains a bachelor's degree from a university—and, in doing so experiences suppression of their voice, culture, and self-actualization—how successful will they be in their career? Bonner et al. (2015) showed that, after completing a doctoral degree,

many Black professors still deal with issues concerning their sense of belonging and acceptance at PWIs. Research on the resiliency of Black graduate students is needed not only to improve the experience of higher education for minority students but also to assist universities in recognizing how to enact changes that create a more welcoming and inclusive social and cultural setting for all students.

Overview of the Theoretical Framework: Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model

Yosso's (2006) Community Cultural Wealth Model is the perfect connector to view and value Black graduate students' resiliency. Yosso designed this model to capture the talents, strengths, and experiences that Black students bring with them to their college environment. The six components of Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model comprise six forms of capital: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance.

Aspirational capital is defined by Yosso (2006) as the "hopes and dreams" (p. 41) Black students have and continue to have as they remain focused on their objectives and goals despite the roadblocks and barriers they face. Aspiration is a key element in being resilient. To bounce back from a situation or event, the student must believe and dream it is possible.

Linguistic capital refers to the various language and communication skills students bring with them to their college environment. According to Yosso (2005), storytelling is a key element within the lives of students of color; they bring with them "skills [that] may include memorization, attention to detail, dramatic pauses, comedic timing, facial affect, vocal tone, volume, rhythm, and rhyme" (p. 79).

Familial capital refers to the social and personal human resources students have in their pre-college environment, drawn from extended familial and community networks. Yosso (2006) explained that "within these environments, students learn how to be strong from various

structures within their family, for example, church, sports, school, and social communities within their culture" (p. 46).

Social capital is defined by Yosso (2006) as students' "peers and other social contacts," who ensure that everyone gains access to necessary social networks. An example would be when Black students play games, such as Spades, in a campus cafeteria or lounge area. During this time, they check on one another's well-being while often sharing information to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to be successful. Valuing and nurturing their cultural capital, and investing in one another's success, improves the students' ability to be a successful community within a PWI, by. "Cultural capital is accumulated, like a deposit in the bank, but cultural wealth is meant to be shared" (Yosso T. J., 2006, p. 46).

Navigational capital refers to the ability of students to navigate "social institutions," including educational spaces. Navigational capital can be viewed as a component of resiliency; it is defined as a set of inner resources, social competencies, and cultural strategies that permit individuals not only to survive but also to recover. It is important for Black students to share social capital as a means of gaining access to navigational capital, due to the lack of guidance available at PWIs (Yosso T. J., 2005, p. 80).

Resistance capital is housed in the experiences of family structures and communities of color. According to Yosso (2006), resistance capital comes from the teachings of elders of the family, such as grandparents and parents, who emphasize equality but also instill ethical and moral standards in younger generations. The belief that students can achieve great things through hard work needs to be ingrained in them at a young age for them to overcome the obstacles presented by society. It is the words and inspiration coming from their home community that

encourages them, that lights the fire in the students, thus giving them the ability to resist

oppression and be resilient simultaneously (Yosso T. J., 2006, p. 48).

Yosso (2005) developed this model to illustrate the talents, strengths, and experience of

students of color. It supports her argument that all forms of capital empower all cultures and

races to go beyond those that are valued by the power culture. Yosso's model of cultural wealth

defines the components that are often not viewed as valuable by the power culture. The

resiliency of Black students is essential, as their experience and knowledge elevate their ability

to utilize their cultural tools to develop an academic self-concept of themselves as productive

students within the structure of a PWI. It is essential for Black students to have support systems

outside of their own culture, such as staff and peers from other cultures. The Community

Cultural Wealth Model illustrates the importance of such support and how it can be utilized not

only for the benefit of Black students but also for the educational system.

Summary

The review of the relevant literature has served as an introduction to the resiliency of

Black people and Black graduate students in America from a historical and educational

perspective. This chapter also examined the social and legal struggles Blacks encountered to gain

equal access to citizenship and educational rights. However, there are gaps in the research on

Black graduate students' lived experiences—both professional and personal, both on and off

campus—and on how these experiences develop and fuel students' resiliency. Further gaps

appear when examining the research on Black women navigating through higher education;

studies have mostly focused on Black men in undergraduate programs with a few addressing the

full P–20 pipeline. The chapter concluded by introducing Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural

Wealth Model as a theoretical lens to view and value the experiences and knowledge Black

graduate student brings to PWIs. The next chapter provides a complete summary of how

narrative inquiry best supports the objective of this study and interacts with the participants in a

personal way. The next chapter also presents the research questions, designed to yield rich and

organic data but also lead to significant findings with implications for research, practice, and

theory.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

In Chapter 1, I very briefly shared my story as a Black graduate student and the various challenges I have encountered both personally and professionally. I explained that, despite the struggle, I retained my willingness and desire to be resilient. In doing so, I became interested in exploring the resiliency of Black graduate students and their ability to be successful, especially at PWIs. In Chapter 2, I reviewed the historical circumstances, empirical literature, and theories that frame this study and attended to the idea of resiliency within Black graduate students. Now, in Chapter 3, I define the research design, narrative inquiry, specifically Scholarly Personal Narrative, as a methodology to explore the resiliency of Black graduate students. Also, I explain the process of data collection and data analysis, and the limitations and assumptions of the research. Before describing the research methods in depth, I must define my position within this research. Who I am has impacted the research questions and design of this study.

Who Am I?

I am a graduate student at the University of Missouri pursuing a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. In 2010, I obtained a master's degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign in Diversity, Equity, and Social Issues in Education, in addition to a master's degree in Global Education in 2012. I received a bachelor's in Organizational Management from Oakland City University in 2004 and an associate's degree in Human Services from the University of Kentucky in 2000. I have an extensive background working in P–20 education, including my work with educational institutions through the Earle C. Clements Job Corps; various community-based programs in the states of Missouri, Illinois, and Kentucky; and the University of Missouri.

I identify as a Black male. My parents, Rosie and Warren McKinney Jr., rest in peace, encouraged me to work smarter not harder due to missing digits on my right hand and the lack of a right chest muscle. Despite my right hand's missing digits, my dad taught me how to tie my shoes, dress, and do everything else the average person takes for granted. It was through that process of adaptive learning that I developed a strong, resilient drive to test myself, to see what I could do despite my physical limitations. I rode bikes on BMX trails with my friends, performing different stunts, and I taught myself how to climb a rope in gym class with a prosthetic attachment. My attempts did not always work out; I lived through many devastating failures. However, through those failures, I continued to press forward while making adjustments to the way I approached tasks to make it feasible for me to complete them. I remember my dad telling me at a young age, "Jason, before you approach a task, analyze what you will do and how you can do it with your hands. This way you will not have to think about it while you are doing it, but you will already have a plan before approaching." My mother's advice was to remember to work smarter because I had three things going against me in society: "you are Black, Black male, and many will view your missing digits as a disability." Because of these reasons always be cautious and resilient.

Through my academic studies in the doctoral program at the University of Missouri, I have come to understand the complexity of why I, being a Black male, was often viewed in a certain light within society. Bourdieu's (1989) cultural production offered the lens to perceive identities and identify the social actors controlling the context of structured powers within the society in which these narrative norms developed. Although many of the cultural elements of various minority groups are appropriated within the habitus (the sphere that links individuals to social structures and vice versa) of the power culture (Whiteness), the original creators of those

elements and skill sets are not given credit. Yosso's (2006) Community Cultural Wealth Model illustrates the way society and education often exclude the cultural wealth and cultural knowledge that minority students bring with them into the classroom and within society itself. The model also illustrates the impact minority students can achieve when they tap into their six cultural capitals described in Chapter 2, which are key anti-deficit components that build self-esteem, the value they see in themselves, and their cultural knowledge and wealth.

I am an extrovert; I enjoy interacting with others, meeting new people, gaining knowledge, developing relationships, and building rapport in the process. My outgoing nature has afforded me many first-hand opportunities to investigate how people form preconceptions on the basis of race or gender or another general attribute that does not fully define me as an individual. While many of these experiences have included negative preconceptions, many others have been positive, and both types have invigorated my resiliency. New cultural knowledge, technology, music, and more arise when people share their stories, tastes, and interests. These interactions and innovations are all forms of narrative inquiry, which I use daily, especially in my religious life.

As a practicing Christian, I want to provide a personal context for my worldview. I believe that humankind is created in God's image (Genesis 1:27; Jeremiah 27:5), and the Bible is the word of God (Psalm 12:16, 119: 89, 105; Proverbs 30:5-6; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12). I believe I am called to act impartially, show love and mercy, walk with humbleness and humility with my God (Micah 6:8), and love my neighbor as myself (Mark 12:31). I believe we need to live in peace with one another and show patience and kindness as Christ did (Romans 12:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 13-15). In my quest to be more like Christ, I strive to reject racism and other forms of discriminatory actions. I embrace the lessons and examples Christ illustrated

within the Bible and endeavor to exercise them in my daily actions (Philippians 2:5; Romans

8:37 – 39; Ephesians 2: 5; 1 John 3:1). My faith is a core part of who I am. Through the

examples of scripture, my parents and other key individuals throughout my life have increased

my trust and faith in God's word, and their devout actions have formed one of the key

components that fuels my resiliency in life. With this backdrop in mind, the rest of the chapter

presents the following sections: Research Questions, Research Design, Data Collection, and Data

Analysis.

Research Questions

This research study considers the following questions within the social and cultural

components Black graduate students face on PWI campuses.

1. How do Black graduate students persist through higher education?

2. What develops and fuels the resiliency of Black graduate students amid the various

    struggles they face?

Research Design

Qualitative research amplifies the voices of study participants and allows the researcher

to connect with both readers and participants on an intimate level as the narrators describe their

thoughts and feelings. This is why narrative inquiry is perfect for capturing the Black graduate

students' experiences. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers should utilize

reflexivity to offer an analysis within a setting based on human belief structures, reflecting a

human's cause and effect components. Utilizing Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN), a particular

form of narrative inquiry further defined below, offers readers access to the experiences shared

by Black graduate students, giving readers the opportunity to understand better and value Black

culture, and perhaps their own cultures, and ultimately appreciate and enhance diversity, equity,

and equality in higher education (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008). Merriam & Tisdell

(2015) agreed, stating "Education, health, social work, administration, and other areas of social

activity are considered applied social sciences or fields of practice precisely because practitioners

in these fields deal with the everyday concerns of people's lives" (p. 1). The objective of this

dissertation is to examine the experiences of Black graduate students and their ability to be

resilient in higher education, which aligns well with Merriam & Tisdell's statement. One may

ask, "why not use quantitative methods?" I would refer them to Braun and Clarke's (2013)

simple distinction between qualitative and quantitative research: the former uses words as data,

and the latter numbers. Plus, quantitative methods limit the researcher's interaction with their

participants; numbers illustrate impacted-on research, but stories and experiences make research

relatable to readers, helping them connect the study to their own experiences.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative research rose to prominence within education during the 1990s and is still

flourishing today. Crotty (1999) stated, "When we narrate something, even in telling our very

own story, it is (again in the normal course of events) the voice of our culture—its many voices,

in fact—that is heard in what we say" (Location No. 1328). According to McQuillan (2000), a

narrative is a form of knowledge that catches the two sides of a story: telling as well as knowing.

The objective of this research is to have the participants' stories told through their own words

and experiences, and then celebrated and examined through a scholarly lens, thus sharing both

sides of the narrative. Riessman (2008) said the term "narrative" carries many meanings and is

used in a variety of ways by different disciplines, often synonymously with "story" (p. 3).

Narrative research shares life experiences from first-hand accounts of events that occurred within

people's lives; examples are life history, oral history, social history from a personal context,

autoethnography, and autobiography (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The research method for my

dissertation incorporated personal stories of Black graduate students to assess their experiences

at PWIs. The personal and cultural lenses of Black graduate students play a large part in the

manner in which they view themselves and their experiences.

Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN)

Narrative inquiry is unique because it approaches a story from the three unique

perspectives of biology, history, and society, which are key components affecting how one lives

and interacts with others throughout a lifetime (Chase, 2010). Hyater-Adams (2012) describes

Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) as a sibling to autoethnography as it interweaves personal

narratives with scholarly writing becoming a legitimate methodology for scholars to distribute

their work within professional - academic journals and dissertations. Hyater-Adams states, "This

type of writing expands the pool of those interested in contributing toward scholarship,

especially with non-traditional and marginalized voices. Research, emotion, and experience are

recognized as key components in the written work" (p. 38). Robert J Nash (2004) created the

phrase contended that SPN "liberate[s] researchers from abstract, impersonal writings and touch

readers' lives by informing their experiences" (p. 28).

SPN is specifically organized around themes, issues, and constructs that couple personal

experience with a broader worldview; narrative inquiry examines the relationship between the

life stories of individuals within the research and the life stories of other people who share

characteristics with the research participants (Kim, 2016). All Black graduate students on PWI

campuses may have similar stories, but each one's life experiences may be slightly different due

to the structure of their university, the location, and the reality of the experience in which they

have lived (Chase, 2010). Due to these similarities and differences, a linear but iterative process

is needed, ensuring all data collected is valued and viewed equally with integrity, which SPN

achieves. I utilized SPN as a means of presenting my reflections in conjunction with the

meaningful past and future experiences and decisions shared by the Black graduate students who

have agreed to join this study. Kim (2016) stated that SPN is adept at "understanding human

experience through stories that, in turn, help us better understand the human phenomena and

human existence" (p. 190). SPN allowed participants to share their experiences in their own

voices and illustrates their stories so that readers can clearly understand, value, and relate to

them, which is the underpinning of this study.

Context of the Study

Qualitative research is structured on the belief that people construct knowledge in an

ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of activity, experience, or phenomena

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 23). My higher education experience as a Black student has

presented various challenges, including encounters with social and cultural segregation in and

outside the classroom and the communities in which my universities reside. Columbia, Missouri,

is a predominantly White city (PWC). PWC refers to the dominant cultural or racial population

within a city. However, a city does not have to be a PWC to be heavily influenced by Whiteness

within its social and cultural hierarchy.

Similarly, all my participants did not attend a PWI located in a PWC from a population

perspective, but the social structure within and around each participant's university reflected

Whiteness. The University of Missouri-St. Louis is a perfect example. Located in a

predominantly Black community, the university has a social structure highly influenced by

Whiteness, and the population of the student body reflects this fact. The university and

surrounding community have alienated non-White cultures through gentrification, limited access,

and the microaggressions that signal to Black students that they are not worthy to attend

(Ramierz, 2018). After countless conversations with other Black graduate students about their

experiences at PWIs, a common theme has emerged: the social atmosphere and community

around a PWI often emulate the social and cultural narrative of the university. Despite these

adversities, Black graduate students continue to achieve success. Conversations with my

participants along with my own experiences ultimately sparked the desire to research the

resiliency of Black graduate students and their ability to be successful at a PWI. Using SPN to

analyze the students' stories will allowed me to examine how Black graduate students interpret

their experiences. SPN gave me the tools (my personal experiences as a Black graduate student)

to investigate how these experiences impact the study participants' perceptions and what role

their responses or nonresponses play in making an impact on the world in which they live

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Participant Sampling

The participants chosen for this study were Ph.D. and Ed.D. students and candidates

attending PWIs who agreed to share their experiences and stories in connection to the research

questions, focusing on their experiences and resiliency as Black graduate students. These

students were from various U.S. universities (listed in Table 2). All participants identified as

Black or African American or Black/Japanese; attended an NCAA Division 1 university, as

defined by the National Collegiate Athletic Association; and were pursuing areas of study that

included education, medicine, engineering, and computer science. I purposefully interviewed one

subject from the West Coast, East Coast, North, and South, as well as five from the Midwest, to

cover the United States. The participants consisted of seven females and three males.

The sample size was based on Kvale's (1996) suggestion that the number of interviews for qualitative studies like this should be around 10 to 15, considering the time and available resources. Similarly, Beitin (2012) argued a suitable sample size is six to 12 participants. According to Kim (2016), the type of data to be collected and its focus should guide the process. I collected life stories, which required a smaller sample group with a possible lengthy interview time. My research focused on life experiences using 10 participants (nine other participants plus myself), which aligns with Kvale (1996) and Beitin's (2012) suggested numbers, with an estimated 90-minute interview per participant to capture the data.

Table 2. Overview of the Nine Participants in This Study

Pseudonym of Participant	University the Participant Attends	Area of Study	Date of Interview
Helen Ruth	University in the West Coast Region	Ph.D.: Critical Race Consciousness and Resistance; Student Leadership; Higher Education & Student Affairs	
Mali Dickerson	University in the Northern Region	Ph.D.: The History and Formation of Suburban Places Shapes Black Families' School Choice Decision-Making in the Detroit Metro Region	
Samuel	University in the East Coast Region	Ph.D.: White Racial Allyship in Traditionally White Institutions	Spring of 2019
Melissa	University in the Southern Region	Ph.D.: Teacher Policy and School Leadership Practices	
Rachel	University in the West Coast Region	Ph.D.: Newly freed (Reconstruction era) African-American women in Missouri and how the practiced freedom through the pursuit of redress	
Angela	University in the Midwest Region	Ed.D.: Single Black Mothers	

Calla	University in the Midwest Region	Ph.D.: Homelessness	
Lynn	University in the Midwest Region	Ed.D.: Persistence of African-American undergraduate women in STEM who participate in the Missouri Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority	
Drake	University in the Midwest Region	Ed.D.: Spelman College students' attitudes towards Spelman's Transgender Admission and Enrollment Policy and Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students	
Jason (Interviewer)	University in the Midwest Region	Ph.D.: The Resiliency of Black Graduate Students and Predominantly White Institutions	

Participant Recruitment Procedure

I used purposeful sampling to focus on the SPN of each Black graduate participant's experiences at their PWI. Merriam & Tisdell (2015) affirmed that purposeful sampling allows the researcher to discover, understand, and gain insight in the most organic way, and therefore the researcher must select a sample from which the most can be learned (p. 96). I met my Black graduate participants at various educational conferences, such as those held by the American Education Research Association (AERA), Association for the Study Of Higher Education (ASHE), University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), and Critical Race Studies in Education Association (CRSEA). Other participants were my peers at the University of Missouri. These Black graduate students fit the desired sample group and the research objectives, and they were identified through informal scholarly interactions and cultural relationships that developed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Attending national conferences gave me the opportunity

to communicate with and recruit participants from different regions of the United States. I

contacted them through email, LinkedIn, and personal communication to invite them to

participate in my research. Networking and social media played a key role in developing

relationships with my participants at other universities, keeping them informed of the

development of the study. I communicated with my participants from the Midwest face to face;

one participant introduced me to a Black graduate student outside the College of Education,

offering a different disciplinary perspective of the same PWI.

Data Collection

Interviewing my participants provided me with a method to connect with them as fellow

Black graduate students, building trust in this research partnership. To ensure a strong interview

process, I developed an interview protocol designed to yield data and ultimately answer the

research questions, giving more clarity to understanding how some Black graduate students are

resilient at PWIs. (See Appendix A.) Ideally, each interview was meant to be more like two

friends talking about their experiences as Black graduate students at a PWI, without any of the

effects of higher education lingo. My follow-up questions focused on the "how" as a researcher.

I had little or no control over behavioral events; previous researchers have explained that the

process of starting with a friendly conversation and then following up with research-oriented

questions ensured the data collection was organic and truthful (Riessman, 2008). However, I

believe that an organic and truthful study such as this can have historical components; this

research would not be validated without incorporating the history of why Black graduate

students need to be resilient within the structure of the American educational system.

By utilizing more practical interview questions yielded the best results in the in-depth

interview format. However, interview questions are only as good as the researcher who is asking

them, which is why it was important for me to be welcoming in the delivery of the questions I posed to my participants. Incorporating additional guiding questions simplified research aims for the interviewees, giving a clear understanding of the overall scope. Guiding questions were beneficial to me so I could gather an in-depth perspective of my participants' responses to the overarching questions, which is an approach supported in the literature (Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer, 1990). Furthermore, I gathered information from my participants before the interview with a pre-interview questionnaire, which further strengthened the interview process and data collection.

Pre-Interview Email Questionnaire (Demographics, via Qualtrics)

I developed a pre-interview questionnaire to gather my participants' background information. The standard information I collected included birthplace, race, gender, family, culture, and places the students have lived and visited.

Interview Protocol

Each participant received an invitation email via Zoom, an online video-conferencing service, to gain access to our meeting. Zoom features included both visual and verbal recordings of the meetings, and each meeting was scheduled for 90 minutes using the Zoom Pro version. Using Zoom came with a few disadvantages, such as difficulty capturing voices when either the participant or I had a slow internet connection. To address these issues, I tested the Zoom connections prior to each interview to assess whether improvements were needed or technical issues had to be fixed. The most significant benefit of using Zoom was the ability to communicate with the participants over long distances, allowing visual and verbal communication. After I conducted in-depth interviews with my interviewees through Zoom, I personally transcribed recordings to ensuring proper documentation of the data using the tools in

Zoom and Microsoft Word. Following elements of data collection are critical to conducting

ethical, transparent research: presenting ethical questions, being an active listener, adapting to

the participant's environment, grasping the issues studied, and avoiding biases (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2015).

Although we are all Black graduate students, that commonality does not mean I knew

how the participants feel or understand their experiences. Each participant's life story was unique

and represented elements of resiliency. Bakhtin (1981) developed global perceptions in literary

theory and, according to Kim (2016), conveyed the following messages over the years: "Avoid

imposing a fixed plot. Focus on the importance of every day, the ordinary, and the quotidian.

Value a dialogic truth derived from unmerged voices. Moreover, embrace unfinalizability as

essential to our freedom, openness, and creativity" (p. 73). Being open with my participants and

allowing their stories to speak their truth aligns with Bakhtin's message. Once the transcribing is

complete, I evaluated the data using the Key Questions Method, as explained in the upcoming

Data Analysis section and in Figure 2, specifically the questions presented later in this chapter, in

the Key Data Analysis Questions section. This method involved an analysis that sought to

answer four key questions to extract contextual data.

Follow-Up Emails (Member Checking)

The follow-up email consisted of thanking my participants for their time and for sharing

their stories and experiences to make my research project a success. It also asked if there were

any questions, concerns, or final thoughts about the interview or research project.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

</div>

Viewing the experiences of the participants and their cultural wealth and knowledge

through the theoretical framework of Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model was a

key element in my research. During my data analysis, I coupled Yosso's model with

Polkinghorne's analysis of narrative. According to Kim (2016), Polkinghorne's analysis of

narrative is an analytical framework that allows the researcher to identify common themes or

conceptual indicators discovered in the data. It is important to examine the data by looking

across the narratives, focusing on common themes in the participants' interviews and organizing

the data under several categories defined by the themes (Kim, 2016; Polkinghorne, 1995).

Yosso's (2005) cultural capital model intersects with one another at times, and sometimes works

independently. By reviewing the video interviews, analyzing the transcripts using the six capitals

as themes of the participants stories/ experiences highlighted within each interview, examining

which cultural capitals where utilized, intertwined or not activated at all. Built on Dewey's

theory three-dimensional space narrative structure approach (Interaction, Continuity and

Situation) Clandinin and Connelly (2000) advanced this position suggesting to understand

people, we need to value their personal experiences, and their interactions with other people from

a social and cultural context .Clandinin and Connelly stated, "An inquirer composing a research

text looks for the patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an

individual's experience and in the social setting" (p. 132). By recognizing common themes and

patterns through the analysis-of-narrative framework, the researcher enhances the understanding

of the participants' lived experiences. Kim (2016) suggested that analysis of narrative involves

(a) describing the categories of themes while reporting the relationships among categories, (b)

uncovering the commonalities between multiple sources of data, and (c) aiming to produce

general knowledge from the evidence while infusing it with the unique characteristics of each

story (p. 197).

Incorporating Polkinghorne's analysis-of-narrative approach allowed each participant's voice and stories to be heard and viewed from their perspective, rather than being perceived as speaking for an entire population or group. This approach allowed the cultural wealth and knowledge of the Black graduate-student participants, as well as their experiences, to be viewed as valid data from the source in the form of a story, which aligns with the main objective of SPN. Riessman (2008) agrees stating "Personal narrative is composed by jointly crafting the narrative in a collaborative, conversational interaction" (p. 31). Utilizing the analysis-of-narrative method within in this study's data analysis allowed each participant's story to remain distinct without being compared to other participants' experiences at PWIs. Overlapping coping methods may become obvious during the analysis, indicating similarities in the participants' narratives, but, most importantly, the analysis focused on how participants navigate through their individual challenges (Bakhtin, 1981).

I analyzed the participants' narratives using the data analysis method shown in Figure 2, which relies on predefined key questions I asked myself and answered as I reviewed each participant's story to ensure that I assessed each narrative in the same manner as my stories would be part of the research (the questions are listed after the figure). Question 1 challenged each interviewee to evaluate a given situation and gauge if the issue stemmed from the current or previous social structure (Bowman N. A., 2010). The situations presented could occur on or off campus. Question 2 asked how the participant perceived their ability to evaluate, confront, and potentially overcome the situation or challenge (Strayhorn T. L., 2012). Some Black students at PWIs feel that they do not have adequate support systems on campus, especially if they are new to the area (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2012). This question explored the resiliency developed and enacted in the lives of Black graduate students. Question 3 focused on the participant's ability to

seek assistance outside of their normal social structures, which probed their perspective and view of the ability to trust others, such as administrators, professors, and counselors (Alheit, 2014).

Data Analysis Method

Key Questions Method
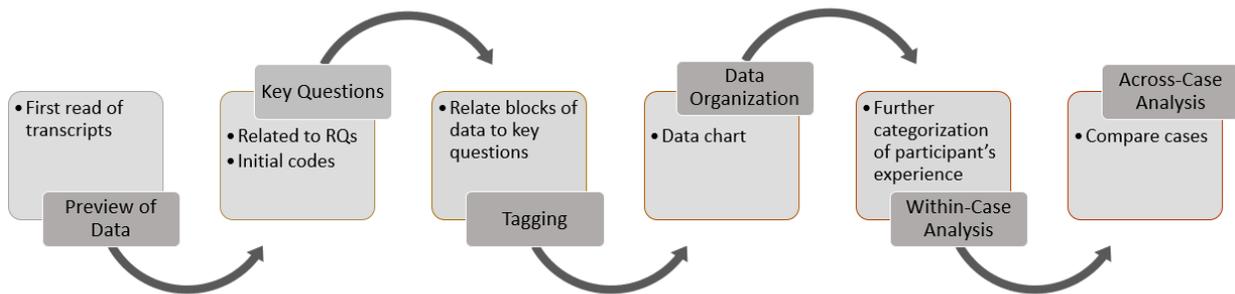
Figure 2. Data Analysis Process Guiding the Analysis of Participants' Narratives

Key Data Analysis Questions

1. What factors contributed to the participant's adverse experiences (separated in columns for on and off campus)? This question was informed by Yosso's navigational capital (2005), which involves a Black graduate student's ability to navigate social institutions and educational spaces outside of their community.

2. What resources did the Black graduate student use to solve their problems? The question related to Yosso's idea of social capital. It examines how students utilize their peers, faculty, administrators, and campus and community services to resolve or find possible solutions to an issue or problem. These resources act as educational and

social support systems, which the Black graduate student develops by building a

rapport and or friendship.

3. What external resources did the Black graduate student utilize? "External" means

    external to the student's Ph.D. university community; this question focused on

    Yosso's concept of familial capital. In this research, "familial" refers to the student's

    family, friends, community, and pre-Ph.D. collegiate environments. Some students

    may have mentors they connected with before college and during their undergraduate

    and master's careers. These contacts who supported them over the years are part of

    their familial capital (their "support family," in other words).

4. How was the Black graduate student resilient within the process, and what was the

    outcome? This final set of questions related to Yosso's ideas of resistance and

    linguistic capitals, which are key pillars in many Black families and community

    cultures. Black graduate students use their vocal tones and comical personalities to

    encourage one another, to value their cultural wealth and knowledge, and to seek to

    secure equal rights as a part of a long legacy in the fight for social justice and equal

    rights (Hurrard, 2011). The family and community stories and histories that the Black

    graduate students hear and share come to embody the resilient characteristics passed

    down through generations and within their cultural legacies (Yosso T. J., 2006).

Every data collection method has strengths and weaknesses; that is why it is best to

incorporate two approaches. Doing so strengthens one's interview questions, observations, data

collection, data analysis, and data categorization. By utilizing the Key Questions Method in

conjunction with analysis of narrative, I was able to develop themes within the data that showed

intersections among the various interviewees' experiences, which was beneficial to the overall research objective.

During the interview process and data analysis I infused my own stories and experiences from a participant's viewpoint, connecting the experiences and stories each participant shared that intersected with my own; a method known as Researcher's Interactive Voice. Genishi & Glupczynski (2006) developed this method and defines it stating:

> The researcher's interactive voice foregrounds the complex interaction or intersubjectivity between researchers' and participants' voices. The adoption of an interactive voice involves researchers examining their voices, interpretations, and personal experiences through the refracted medium of participants' voices. The weaving together of relationships with research purposes challenges the researcher to consider where she or he positions her or himself within the context of the study (p. 670).

This method allowed my experiences and stories to be valued and shared in the same manner as my participants. Therefore, allowing the reader to become part of the research, reflecting on their own personal stories and experiences that connects to the data.

Limitations and Assumptions

Although my story and experiences are a part of the research, my epistemology and life experiences were taken into consideration throughout the study to avoid imposing my own understandings and stories upon the individual stories of my participants. I was careful to consider the value of the participants' stories and experiences in their organic form. The social constructionist viewpoint is that all narratives are located within the intersection of history, biography, and society. I am a Black graduate student studying Black graduate students with

similar experiences and stories. Several of them I know personally, which could raise potential concerns regarding trustworthiness. I have taken steps to address this potential limitation by sharing my research positionality statement (Who Am I?), which provides transparency regarding my objectives and personal connections to the topic, participants, and intended use of the results. Furthermore, interpreting the authentic narratives of the participants will guard against the potential limitation; presenting the data in its organic form will allow the voices of my participants to be heard.

This study also had limitations related to technology. I decreased the technical limitations by ensuring each of my participants understood how to operate the Zoom video-conferencing program and had a working Zoom link by performing a vocal and visual test before the scheduled interview. According to Merriam & Tisdell (2015), what the mind can visualize during a video transmission is what is captured by the camera concerning body language and voice tones within the participant's space; this constrained environment limits their responses.

Researcher Reflexivity

Kim (2016) stated, "Although we understand that it is impossible to address all the possible limitations, we can take some of these issues into consideration during our research processes to make more meaningful and thoughtful knowledge claims" (p. 246). It is for this reason, Kim (2016) suggested, that researchers must use reflexivity in their research; it plays an important role in the development of *phronesis* (practical wisdom), meaning an understanding of what constitutes good actions, character, and habits, otherwise thought of in Ancient Greek philosophy as practical virtue, which informs a person's values and ethics.

Reflexivity is a useful tool for understanding both the nature of ethics in qualitative research and how ethical research practices are developed. A caring, reflexive researcher

monitors their actions to ensure the dignity of their participants is respected (Kim, 2016). These concepts offer a framework to recognize and clarify the biases a researcher brings to their work, thus helping to overcome the risk that a researcher might draw conclusions unsupported by the data by extrapolating their lived experiences and connecting their experiences to broader politics, principles, values, and beliefs (Bott, 2010). It is important for researchers not to advertise their values and beliefs from a position of power to avoid influencing the research through their positionality. By proclaiming values and beliefs, a researcher risks creating judgments among study participants and ethical problems that can impact the collection and analysis of data (Rinehart & Earl, 2016). Kim (2016) wrote, "We need to incorporate reflexivity into our narrative research not only to achieve the rigor of research but also to maintain our own as well as our participants' integrity" (p. 250). A researcher who fails to apply reflexivity could stain their reputation and call into question the trustworthiness of their work.

Summary

For many reasons discussed in this chapter, narrative inquiry in conjunction scholarly personal narrative is the appropriate methodological approach for discovering and finding common themes among the stories and experiences of Black graduate students at PWIs that impact and fuel their resiliency. As a Black graduate student myself, many of their stories and experiences connect with me both from an identity perspective and in terms of our similar experiences. Next, Chapter 4 explores the stories and experiences of the 10 students who participated in this study. My goal was to develop a meta-narrative of the various experiences Black graduate students have at PWIs but highlight how the students themselves defined their experiences and their individual forms of resiliency. Viewing the many ways Black graduate students develop and fuel their resiliency allowed each participant to reach their own definition

of success, and ultimately helps readers to craft pathways to success for themselves, loved ones,

coworkers, scholars, and the institutions in which we all must learn and thrive.

Chapter 4: Stories of Experiences and Resiliency (Findings)

In Chapters 1 and 3, I briefly shared my story as a Black graduate student and the various challenges I have encountered, both personally and professionally. The impact that stories and experiences have on one's developmental process going into adulthood is astonishing. Think about how stories and life experiences influence decision-making and the manner in which people process real-time events, impacting the choices they make. The lessons and stories shared by the Black graduate students in this study illustrate the usefulness of Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model . The model helped to analyze the data and highlight the themes that gave analytical structure to the stories that the participants told about their educational and life experiences.

The study participants consisted of two Ed.D. students and seven Ph.D. students. I also recount my own experiences in this study, bringing the total number of participants to 10 even though I only conducted nine interviews with other people. Each participant was identified using a pseudonym and their state of birth. At the time of the study, two participants were preparing to graduate in May 2019. The others spanned the 3rd to 6th year of their degree programs. Each participant represented a different experience that many Black graduate students may encounter as a student at a PWI. Their views of higher education were affected by their PK–12 experiences, which shaped the lens through which they viewed education. But those views evolved with new skills and life lessons. Each story and experience the participants shared built upon the one before, contributing to shared concepts of being Black at a PWI while retaining their identities and cultural views. There existed strong similarities among all the participants in terms of their perceptions of how higher education undervalues Black culture, but there were

differences in whether the participants viewed these situations as racially motivated or not. While all the participants identified as Black, there were two descriptive titles used by participants: Black and Black/African American. One participant identified as Black while their background included African American and Japanese heritage based on their mother's genealogy.

In this chapter, I will present the participants' experiences in the framework of Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model , highlighting their skills and connections to each theme within the model support their ability to be resilient as Black graduate students. Portraying the stories in the participants' own words is crucial to valuing and respecting their cultural knowledge and cultural wealth as data in the personal scholarly narrative. Polkinghorne (2005) states, "People have access to much of their own experiences, but their experiences are not directly available to public view. Thus, the data gathered for the study of experience need to consist of first-person or self-reports of participants' own experiences" (p. 138). I could not share every detail of the interviews, as this study did not focus on the individual participants' stories or experiences. Rather, this study sought to describe the overall encounters and stories of Black graduate students. According to Polkinghorne (1991), "Narrative structure and organizational features function as an organizing scheme of everyday experience and action, whether or not the narrative structure or the act of narrative structuring takes the form of explicit verbalization" (p. 141).

I interviewed each participant individually. Once the interview pleasantries were over, the cultural conversation began, transitioning from an interview to a conversation. I was not surprised by this organic transition, as this is the usual format in which

communication occurs within Black communities, at social functions, for example, and within music genres like hip-hop, R&B, and neo-soul—members of the community tell a personal story, intertwining short stories within the overall conversation. Allowing the participants to take slight detours, to share their own experiences, created what is known as transitional openings to broaden the discussions, permitting participants' narratives to flow from all elements of the conversations (Phoenix, 2008). These transitional points illustrated how our cultural links went beyond building rapport and developed a deeper level of confidence in one another so that the participants could be open and share thoughts freely. This progression allowed them to revisit circumstances and situations they may not have thought about in a long time. When recalling events, participants could see the relevance and the impact of those situations on who they are today, which allowed me to reflect on similar moments and how those events impacted my development.

Brief Introduction of the Participants

The participants attended universities in various regions of the United States: five participants in the Midwest; one each in the Northern, Eastern, and Southern Regions; and two in the West. From a gender perspective, three participants identified as male and seven identified as female. Table 3 highlights the pseudonyms chosen by the participants, including my own. It also describes our relevant locations, comparing the regions in which we were raised (home state) to where we were living as graduate students at the time of the study (region of institution). Six participants identified as Black, three as Black/African American, and one as Black/Japanese. One participant was born in Jamaica but raised in Florida from the age of 8.

Table 3. 1 Pseudonyms of the 10 Participants, Regions of Institutions, Home States, and

Racial/Ethnic Identity

Pseudonym of Participant	Region of Institution / Home State	Race/Ethnic Identity
Angela	Midwest /California	Black
Calla	Midwest / Indiana	Black/African American
Drake	Midwest / Georgia	Black/African American
Helen Ruth	West Coast / California	Black /Japanese
Jason	Midwest / Michigan	Black/African American
Lynn	Midwest / Indiana	Black
Mali Dickerson	Northern / Texas	Black
Melissa	Southern / Jamaica (Florida)	Black
Rachel	West Coast / California	Black
Samuel	East Coast / North Carolina	Black

In the following section, I share themes from participants' stories that reflect key

components of Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model —specifically, the six

forms of capital: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance

capital. After this, I shared a few examples of capitals intersecting. This study's process

aligned with the model's structure, the stories, experiences, and quotes of the participants

were presented under the capital in which they align and /or intersect.

Yosso's Capitals in the Stories of the Participants

Aspirational Capital

I dreamed of becoming a scientist as a child. Then I wanted to build robots,

inspired by the *Transformer*s cartoon. No matter how many times I changed my dream,

my parents would say, "Jason, you can be whatever you want to be if you focus and study

and pray." My parents were big on education, and it showed in the number of

encyclopedias, dictionaries, and various books within our home and family conversations

concerning our outlooks on life. Yosso (2006) calls aspirational capital the ability to see one's self beyond the racial inequalities and negative narratives and to believe that you can accomplish anything by staying focused on your goals. One of this study's participants, with the pseudonym Melissa, described characteristics that are similar to my own, as her desire to advance in education was linked to her parents. Melissa stated:

> My parents instilled the importance of education at an early age, and I worked hard to be successful. My parents encouraged me to take the AP and honor course, which worked well in obtaining scholarships to further my education and reach the highest level I could. My mother was a teacher, and she fought for us to be in our correct grades. Just because my brother and I were younger. It didn't mean we were not capable of understanding the material because we were well advanced.

Melissa and I grew up with parents that illustrated their aspirations, both through encouragement and leading by example. But aspiration does not always come from home. Calla connected her aspiration to opportunities made available outside of the home, specifically, through some of her teachers.

> I think middle school was defining for several reasons. I felt like I had an opportunity to learn math. I had great math teachers and the opportunity to meet a lot of great friends, a lot of great teachers, learn a lot of different skills. {After} First encounters with teachers,{they}recommended me to go to, like, science camps for, like, weeks at a time at Purdue University. My mom didn't ever really push me to excel in school, but it was more, "So long as you don't fail." But it wasn't to get on the honor roll every year. I didn't have that drive from my

family. I did it, and I was just [intent] on the honor roll . . . because I was like all

the work is easy. I can do it.

Calla was encouraged by her teachers as they saw the potential and, in doing so, ignited her own belief in her abilities and cultural knowledge to advance academically in math and other subjects. While Calla's mom did not push her to excel at the highest level, Angela's mother did, and it showed in her actions. However, reflecting on her childhood, Angela remembered how her mother's good intentions segregated her from her own culture, stating:

I'm the only child of a single, Black mother, and education has always been

important to her. So, she put me in school as soon as I could go to school. I went

to private school my whole life. I was the only Black student in my class for the

whole elementary, middle-school career. So, the only interaction I had with Black

people was when I attended family gatherings. Even my friends outside were

White.

Angela's aspiration for education developed by her mother's desire to ensure she would do well, but the cost was being excluded from her culture. In general, education systems in the U.S. have not valued minoritized groups' cultural knowledge, nor the cultural wealth that minority students bring with them to the classroom, especially Black students (Yosso T. J., 2005). Angela shared what she believed drove her mom's actions, "I guess she thought I would have a better education if I were with all White people." However, Angela's experiences encouraged her to ensure her children would have a better experience stating, "I'm looking for private preschools for my son, religious/spiritual-based school. But I do want it to be a diverse school. I believe being

exposed to more diverse environments better equips one to interact and work with other people better."

A parent's (family) narrative can impact not only the way a child views education but life itself, as Rachel stated:

> My father was in the army, born in St. Louis, Missouri, and he'd always talk
> about how he grew up poor. And my mother's Japanese; she's from Sendai,
> Japan. She just basically went to high school, so neither one of them had any
> knowledge of higher education. My sisters and I didn't get any knowledge about
> college from our parents. Sometimes, we would hear something about going to
> college from our father's side of the family. We would be at a family member's
> house, and the adults were talking, and they would be like, "Yeah, they need to go
> to college, you know." But my dad would never say anything positive concerning
> education.

The narratives that Rachel's father's side of the family presented shaped not only her aspirational capital but her linguistic capital as well, as described later. Aspiration capital does not come from parents alone but from extended family and the community in which one lives.

In contrast, Drake shared how his parents supported him up to their level of educational knowledge, and then he received aspiration from other areas, like pop culture and TV shows:

> My parents didn't necessarily excel beyond a master's degree. So, my story is like
> stories of parents that know they can't help their kids anymore with their
> homework. It's just kind of like, Drake is doing his thing; all I [can] do is

encourage him. Because for them, it wasn't relatable for my dad and my mom.

My stepmom, a veterinarian, is a motivational factor because she did it. I saw that

I could do it too. She was the one I could lean on and discuss graduate life more

so than my parents. It's crazy how this may sound, but . . . the television show *A*

Different World was my most significant influence on college life because, if it

weren't for *A Different World*, then I wouldn't have a desire to go to a college

campus. In high school, the show encouraged me to attend the summer bridge

program.

Drake shared how the culture within the television show's Black community had an

impact on his aspiration to advance in higher education, and I agree! Shows like A

Different World and *The Cosby Show* portrayed Blacks in ways that were not advertised

or presented in our schools, our neighborhoods, and the majority of other shows, which

presented Blacks in a demeaning manner. Television programming like A *Different*

World and *The Cosby Show* presented the Black culture in a positive light. They offered

us an alternative lens through which we could see Black people succeeding in areas

outside of sports and music while keeping our cultural heritage and community in their

raw forms.

While many participants developed aspirational capital from family and

community, according to Nichols, Kotchick, McNamara Barry, & Haskins (2010)

educational aspirations do not automatically develop within a student's mindset, as their

living or school environments may also *discourage* them from dreaming beyond their

current situation. Samuel shared how a negative perception of his academic abilities,

expressed by teachers and schools, affected his aspiration to succeed:

> So, my [first-year in middle school,] sixth grade, I was in an advanced class; the
> school wanted to try something different, placing advanced students in regular
> classes. I could tell the difference almost immediately. I used to get into it with
> teachers because they essentially talked to us like we're not smart, from a deficit
> manner. I excelled, but the fact [that the teacher's viewed us] as unable to learn
> was frustrating.

I can also relate to Samuel's story. I have been in classrooms in various educational
settings where the teacher or professor viewed their Black students as having a deficit,
and it showed by the way the instructor declined to acknowledge the students' abilities
and downplayed their positive efforts. The instructors used discouraging statements and
offered no positive feedback on which the students could build their aspirations. Calla's
story illustrated how some teachers see the potential of their students, no matter the race
or culture, and inspire them to grow to their full potential. However, some teachers know
Black students have great potential but insist on viewing them through a deficit lens, as in
Mali Dickerson's story.

> In Texas, the sixth grade is when they determine your skillset, if you're going to
> be in gifted and talented programming. My sixth-grade teacher was a White male
> named Mr. DuPont, and he always would call and say I was talking too much in
> class like he had it out for me. And when it came time to nominate students for
> the program, your teachers or your parents could nominate you. There are three
> different parameters [to gain access to the program]: reading/writing [and
> science/math are judged] via a test and [the third is] talent . . . . And the third
> parameter is based on the teacher's perspective, does your teacher think that

you're gifted and talented. I took the test and did very well with the English arts

section but not the math and science sections. Mr. Dupont wrote the letter for me

to test, but he said he didn't think I was gifted and talented. And so, it's

interesting to me looking back on it because, I'm like, there's all this research that

shows that, you know, having Black teachers is a huge indicator or correlated

with Black students being in gifted and talented programs. I didn't get in a gifted

and talented program because the teacher didn't see any talent or view me as

gifted. I believe having White teachers affected my K–12, but I went on.

In contrast, Mali Dickerson explained how the experiences of advanced classes

were part of her aspiration. They empowered her going forward in her academic career

and life:

I went to a very well-resourced large high school in Texas and was able to take a

lot of AP classes. I also think the key to my educational trajectory is I did summer

programs, where I would go for a couple of weeks to a different college. My mom

was good about finding stuff like that. It helped me to think about colleges outside

of Texas and expand my horizons. I was able to achieve outside my teachers'

comments or interactions.

In summary, a wide range of experiences in PK-12 can shape aspirational capital.

Aspiration can come from parents, extended family, or pop culture. Both positive and

negative experiences in K-12 can empower aspirational capital by activating students'

resistant capital to counter the negative perceptions of teachers like Mr. DuPont in

Drake's and Rachel's stories (as further discussed in the section on resistance capital).

The next section highlights how these experiences affected participants' aspirational capital in their higher education journey, in particular.

Aspiration in higher education.

As related earlier, the show *A Different World* was a great example, illustrating how Black students could excel in higher education and go beyond the narratives that society places on Black students. But as the title states, it was a different world. *A Different World* highlighted the HBCU experience, not the experience at a PWI, and I often wonder how different the show would have been if its setting were a PWI. If we could reboot the show, Helen Ruth's story would provide excellent source material, as her story highlighted the experiences of all my participants.

When I started my Ph.D. in 2015, USC was not in the right place in terms of racial climate because, at the end of my first year, the university decided to do a racial climate study. They recruited Shaun Harper and his team to lead the study through focus groups. The findings illustrated that students of color are not valued and feel isolated. I did not feel validated. But in the process of them doing the original climate study, I felt validated because it was like, finally, these faculty and administrators can see that we are not just complaining about a bunch of nothing. A race expert came in, did focus groups with us. I like to call them therapy sessions between faculty and students, as the experts came and said look and listen to these students' concerns.

It was a rough start, but it has gotten better over time. I think much of it is because of the dedication that the faculty now [have; they] must want to create a better set of courses, better curriculum, just overall [wish] to create a more

welcoming environment for students of color. We lost, I think, two, a Black
[woman] and Latino woman, in my cohort. We lost up to, I think, a total of five or
six in one year across groups—all students of color. So, I believe that tells you
something in terms of the kind of support that we were receiving.

In one instance, during one of our conversations, I had a White woman
professor tell me that she apologized to me, in front of the entire program,
because we were having a facilitated discussion about our issue. And the White
woman professor said to me that she wanted to apologize to me because, during
the week where we were talking about the *Brown v. U.S. Board of Education*
case, it was a policy course. We were talking about desegregation, and I said,
"You know, I think that we should consider the ways that desegregation wasn't
the best for Black people. We lost our resources; White folks did not." Instead of
validating it at the moment and engaging with and entertaining that discussion and
saying, you know what, let's explore that more deeply, it went silent. She was
like, let's move on to the next point.

As Helen Ruth shared her story, I could see the impact this incident had her aspiration to
share her thoughts, believing her input would be valued, as her voice elevated and her
body slightly tensed up as she continued to share her experience:

The professor apologized and said that she took that statement that I made,
and she thought about it for months and months and months. She never thought
about that point and was just so appreciative of me for sharing it. And while I did
appreciate, at the moment, that she shared that with me, I couldn't help but think
about all of the moments for the entire year that other students of color or I had

said things, and it had fallen on silence. It was always silent, and so that came

from their ignorance of not knowing how to engage with my critical statements

that I was trying to make to complicate the conversations, bring race into the

forefront. So, I couldn't help but feel like my entire experience in the program

was shaped by their inadequacy to be able to engage with my intellectual

contributions. Consequently, thankfully, things have gotten better. The new

students coming in expressed that the curriculum has changed, and the White

female professor now engages in a very different conversation when it comes to

segregation in her policy course.

Helen Ruth's story showcased how aspirational capital is so necessary to remain

resilient in Black graduate students' educational journeys. Yosso (2005) supports this

position stating "aspirational capital is the ability to hold onto hope in the face of

structured inequality and often without the means to make such dreams a reality" (p. 77).

According to Strayhorne (2012) Black graduate students who lose their aspiration for

learning due to the lack of being valued within a program and their voice is being ignored

are more likely to drop out, and not complete their masters/PhD program. Helen Ruth's

aspirational capital was negatively affected when the professor didn't appreciate her

insight, sparking her resistance capital to respond in defense. She shared how things have

changed since the racial climate study, illustrating how that event empowered Helen Ruth

to stand on her morals and resist inequality and the oppression of her intellectual

knowledge. Yes, having access to enter the halls of higher education is excellent, but

what is the point if the intellectual knowledge and lived experiences we bring with us are

not valued equally to those of others.

Linguistic Capital

Yosso (2006) believes storytelling is a crucial component within the lives of students of color. Known as linguistic capital, storytelling and other communicative experiences convey messages that I love to share, and I am very animated, which is common within the Black community. Sharing stories allows me to show my personality and connect with the individuals and groups that I interact with. There are times when I am singing a song or saying a term or phrase that connects to a cultural phenomenon or theme within the Black community, and other Black students can relate to it from a personal perspective. Through this process, I can be open and honest while highlighting my cultural knowledge and cultural wealth on the subject matter. The way we greet one another, the foods we cook, the clothes wear, and the words we speak within our communities have all intertwined and defined how we interact with others, especially those from minority communities. Angela expressed this as a challenge, sometimes, as she attended private schools where she was the only Black student within the community.

> I remember this conversation, quite clearly, when I was about—I was in third grade. I have an aunt, and my aunt's a teacher, and she told me, she's like, "You know, it's okay. You don't have to talk that way. While we are at home, around your family, you can be yourself, and it's okay." She told me all about code-switching, you know, how you can use slang at home. It's okay. And you know, when you go to school, then turn that back on. But when you're at home, you can be relaxed and be yourself. But I never felt like I had to change myself at home. My family, everyone in my family, says I'm the White girl or I cook like White people. My granny and auntie would tell me that right now today. They say, "You

need to stay out of the kitchen," because I cook like a White person. So code-switching, yes, I do feel like when, you know, I'm around our class, I feel like I can be ultimately myself. I don't know. It's hard. It's tough to describe. I feel like I am myself, but I don't share too much of myself because I feel like I won't fit in as much, as I already don't fit in. So, that's my code-switching, I think, appearance in speaking in public.

I can relate to Angela's story, having had similar experiences during childhood and currently in my graduate school career. Being mindful of how you carry yourself in front of White people is often viewed as important to illustrate that you are intelligent or intellectual from their perspectives. Often this has meant not including your cultural knowledge or cultural personality but conforming to the social structures of White culture. I remember I was in class at the University of Illinois, and I was doing good, expressing myself in the proper form. I call it education-ese, meaning I was talking in higher education's language. And everybody was like, "Yeah." Then somebody asked a question, and I gave a textbook response. But then somebody made a statement that rubbed me the wrong way, and boom, I went from textbook to my cultural/community vibe in my response. The transition, my code-switching, was quick, and then I went back to education-ese. It surprised everyone, as the only people in the class who related to my statement were minorities, a Black female from Chicago and a Venezuelan female from the East Coast. Everyone else in my class was White.

Linguistic capital involves not only how one speaks and one's demeanor from a cultural perspective but also one's ability to adapt in various situations while infusing those situations with cultural knowledge (Yosso T. J., 2005). Fortunately, I was able to

implement my code-switching while staying true to my cultural knowledge. However, the essential point to my story is that the code-switching ignited my resistance capital and navigational capital, allowing me to code-switch seamlessly while losing neither my intellectual nor culture grounding. Yosso's (2006) definition of linguistic capital and the stories shared by my participants and me highlight how language, culture, social access, and lived experiences intertwine. It is not just a way of speaking, but how we use language in combination with our lived experiences. The world views both in particular ways through stories. The following story from Rachel illustrated how not having a clear understanding of one's linguistic capital can affect a person's confidence in asking questions and expressing thoughts.

> Listening to these students articulate their ideas and come up with questions, and I always thought, "My God, how did they come up with these questions? I don't know how to come up with a question like that." I can't speak for any other students, but I can certainly speak for myself in terms of why I think that I have such a problem with questions, not so much anymore but certainly my first two to four years. During my time growing up as a child, you could not question anything. "Why do I have to stay? Why? What? Why can't?" And the response would be, "You better shut up." I remember I got slapped one time by my dad because I started saying, "But why?" Slap! So, questioning is—it's such a different concept, you know, because there are cultural aspects and a vocabulary.
>
> During the interview, Rachel talked about her Dad's childhood, stating, "he had it

hard growing up." Rachel spoke of her

aunt sharing that their father was very harsh to her brother, and sadly, those damaging narratives became a part of his method of raising children. Rachel continued to share these experiences affected her in her higher education journey:

Especially here at Berkeley, there's a specific vocabulary that, you know—I won't say you're expected to speak, but I had a problem developing questions in my first year or two of my Ph.D. I remember one day spending six hours trying to come up with one question for a theory class. Because my whole thing was, they're all White men who are propped up as, like, philosophical geniuses. Their names are on buildings, and you want me to question what they said. I didn't understand what questions were or what they mean by asking a question. I thought they spent all this time writing all this and then you all have said that they're great. I am thinking about how I am going to ask something about what they're saying; I couldn't even get my mind to think like that. To put it mildly, I threw in the towel before I ever started. I thought, I could not even ask my dad why I can't go outside after a particular time. It was so hard for me. It took what seemed like forever to finally be able to ask a question that I felt was valid. It was a year and a half ago.

After developing a question, the situation became worse as the professor would review the items and acknowledge the questions in class, but she never selected any of mine. This just cosigned on what I already thought, which was, I don't know what the hell I'm doing here. And I said that so many times. I called my sister; I call my younger sister, and I was like, "I gotta get out of here! I don't know what I'm doing. Like, I don't understand what's going on here. I can't ask a

question. I can't talk in class because I don't know what I can't get in these

conversations." And she said, "You're there to learn. If you already knew

everything, you don't need to be there." That gave me a tiny, tiny little bit of

relief. But when I was telling her and what I would always tell people is that it

doesn't help me right now at the moment because I got to go into this classroom

and I'm expected to talk. And I don't know!

Like with any language associated with discipline, community, or culture,

the more you can speak it, the more you can interact with people, and the further

you can go. For example, if you're in Mexico, and you can't communicate to find

out, you know, where you're trying to get to or whatever, you can go nowhere.

People aren't going to let you go further if they don't think you can speak the

language. You know, you're not going to get chosen for opportunities if you don't

talk the language. So honestly, I don't apply for things that don't apply because I

don't want to waste my time applying for stuff. I don't believe I would have a

shot. I asked for certain things that I do think I have a chance for. Thank God for

Mellon Mays.

Linguistic capital involves not only language but also intellectual and social skills

introduced through social and familial experiences. Rachel felt out of place as her peers

in the course spoke of their experiences and developed questions with ease while her

upbringing affected her ability to question. Rachel's childhood hindered the growth of

her linguistic capital from a social and educational perspective. However, the Mellon

Mays Fellowship Program and associated support system was a great help to Rachel's

financial and linguistic capital.

Mali Dickerson had similar experiences to Rachel. She had not had early access to traveling abroad and learning about other cultures, which negatively affected other people's perceptions of Mali Dickerson's personal experiences as well as her ability to interact with those who had such experiences. That is, similar to others, her linguistic capital was not valued in higher education; she was anxious about how to engage in her Ph.D. program in particular:

Even though I had been, you know, exposed to these college programs, I don't think I realized the depth of educational access and opportunity that these wealthy families were having in terms of meeting folks who had gone to the best-of-the-best private schools in New York. I remember feeling a little out of place when I got to college. I never even left the country, and I was, like, sitting in a class where people are [talking about] something in Greek history, and they been there more than once. And I'm like, "Oh, you've been to that site. You've seen the ruins of it." Or whatever.

During my first year as a Ph.D. student, I feel a lot of anxiety around engaging in classes. I'm a sensitive person, and it takes me a while to feel comfortable, evaluate situations. And I was dealing with imposter syndrome issues. I would think a lot about what I would say before I would say it. I didn't feel entirely comfortable going off the cuff. I wanted to make sure what I said was deep, and you know, I end up not saying anything because I overthought. Later that year, I reflected on what Vivian Garrison told me during my time as a grad student at Penn State. She said, "Do good work. The Academy has all different types of people, all different types of personalities. But if you do good work and

write well, you will be recognized." So, when I had trouble engaging in classes,

and sometimes, I feel like I was genuinely struggling with anxiety, I would

always tell myself, "Do good work, Mali Dickerson."

While Mali Dickerson felt that she experienced a lack of white linguistic capital,

her experiences at Penn State and the words of a former professor were the key factors

that grounded and reassured her of her ability to be successful in higher education. Dr.

Garrison's words were the determining factor in ensuring that Mali Dickerson could do

good work. The professor believed in her skill set and her cultural wealth and cultural

knowledge, and Mali Dickerson invited that belief within herself. It is not just professors

that make a difference, though. Broadly speaking, familial capital is strong in supporting

Black graduate students.

Familial Capital

Now and then, when I get down and feel a little discouraged, I reflect on the

words of my parents and mentors from church and my former school experiences, all

telling me that I can do it. Specifically, I think of the words of my mother: "Remember

Baby Boy, you can do whatever you want to if you put your mind to it and focus,

studying and praying for God's guidance. You can do it!" Although my family supported

me with encouraging words, they were not the only ones that cared for me in a family-

like manner. The unique thing about the Black community is that we associate those that

support us as being one of the family. Friends become cousins, and supportive professors,

staff members, and administrators become uncles and aunts. Yosso speaks of friends in

relationship to familial, but it's in the context of friends within the community one is

raised, which is different. In the Black community a church mother could play the role of

your grandmother and supportive colleagues in college become your cousins, big brother/sister or little brother/sister. I remember being spanked by neighbors if I did something wrong, and would get another spanking, once I returned home. Although times have changed, there are a few people I know in various parts of the country I call family (familial) such as the Wilson's who are not blood relatives; but the love and support transcends the definition of blood relatives.

Familial capital denotes the social and personal interactions Black graduate students have. These contacts are established in the students' pre-college experiences, are drawn from their extended familial and community networks during their college years, and sometimes, even remain after the students graduate (Yosso T. J., 2005). Familial capital is different from social capital, but the stories in this research illustrate that the two often work in tandem. The beautiful thing about higher education is that one can meet people who will become lifelong friends, in classes, on campus, or at various social events one may attend. However, there is nothing better than having a reliable support system from home, within the community one is from, or a cheerleading friend. Samuel spoke of his strong bond with his brother.

> Because I have my brother (twin) on campus, we studied together. We spent a lot of time together, but my brother was more organized than I. We both did well. He was always much more like, you know, "We're going to the library for six hours," something like that. Well, in our first year, he's still my best friend; he was one of my few friends on campus. So, if you go to the library, I guess I'm going to the library. So, there's always been that kind of competition and encouragement to see who would do better. Yeah. For sure.

Calla received support from her family and friends, but it was her pastor that encouraged her and from whom she sought advice.

I had a pastor at Indiana University who was, at that time, the associate director of athletics, or something like that. He was very high up on the chart. He had his J.D., but he was also going back to school to get his Ph.D. We would see him at that moment struggling and grappling with that experience, staying up all night to write his dissertation and having his kids sleep on the office floors while he's writing. He has shared those experiences and would preach about those experiences. He would say, "If you have the opportunity to go to grad school, go for it! You are young. You are brilliant." And that was an inspiring moment for me. I didn't have any thought of going to grad school before that. But after he said that, I was like, "Hmm, maybe." Then I put it back down, tucked away in a drawer and never thought about it until I was in an athletics job that said, well, to do this job fulltime, you need a master's degree. Now I am working on my Ph.D.!

Just like Calla, my pastor and church at home, as well as the local church at school, are a massive part of my support system. Samuel, Mali Dickerson, Helen Ruth, Angela, and Lynn made similar statements in their interview sessions. From receiving words of encouragement, dinner invitations on nights we did not cook, or invitations to social functions to keep us grounded and connected to a community outside of school— all these experiences allowed us to be us without the scholarly hat on. The church is not the only place to find this form of support, as Lynn's story showed. She discovered familial capital within her African Studies department as a master's student.

Every institution has its problems, but it depends on that core group of faculty

members that come together as a family for you that make your experiences

positive. I think the African Studies department students at IU (Indiana

University) were shielded in a way where other students and other majors weren't

because we were a small department. Our professors collaborated with other

Black professors across campus, forming a community network. We would have a

lot of different people coming to our functions, or we would have professors

saying, "Connect with professor so and so. He focuses on linguistics," and so on.

From my experience, it speaks volumes of some Black faculty's desire to see

Black students succeed, and they go above and beyond in helping us achieve our

goals.

Although [my master's experience was] vastly different from my

undergrad experience at Boston University back in the 1980s. We had one Black

faculty member I can recall, but he was a chartered mentor at a place called "the

Black House," which today will be the African-American cultural center. I don't

remember seeing any other Black faculty on campus, honestly, or in the

classroom. We were 4% of the population. So, think almost 20,000 students, and

we were 4% of the 20,000 as Black people. I don't remember seeing any Latinos

or any other minority groups on campus.

Lynn's educational experiences from undergrad to graduate school illustrate how

much things have improved, and they show how familial and social capitals intersect at

certain times and situations. The African Studies department at Indiana University

exemplified familial capital and social capital in Lynn's experiences. Some of her

experiences highlighted the social aspect but were developed within a familial-capital setting, further demonstrating how the two capitals are intertwined. Sadly, Helen Ruth's story showed that there is more work to be done in diversifying the faculty and administrator roles at PWIs.

> I try to build relationships with Black folks all over the university so that we can create space and share space and fellowship, knowing that we all are kind of in our shit. As you know, the Ph.D. process is very isolating, so there's only so much that we can share, even as two Ph.D. students in the very same program. If we have different research, different advisors, and different research teams we're on, there's already so much that we can't relate to. So, then to be able to get together and talk about my writing goals, talk about what's happening outside of our academic life, talk about my future goals, the stressors among other Black students in my program, or even just across the university, have sustained me to get through these past three and a half years. I'm just blessed to have that community.

When Helen Ruth shared this information, she expressed the lack of support her university was providing for Black students and other minority students on campus. Helen Ruth utilized her social capital to connect with other Black students across campus who would provide her with a campus community (familial capital) that not only related to her struggles but offered encouragement in the effort to be resilient and press forward. Lynn's experience emphasized familial capital in the African American Studies department in correlation with social and linguistical capitals; while Calla's story

demonstrated familial and aspirational capital from a community perspective through the example of her Pastor.

Social Capital

Helen Ruth's story in the previous section showed why PWIs, and higher education in general, need to improve how they communicate and interact with minority students, to build a community where everyone is welcomed and has a sense of belonging. Yosso's (2005) definition of social capital is at the base of this concept as it offers peers and other social contacts access to information and connections that help to navigate through the higher education system and ensure a student's academic success. Social capital involves an individual's condition within society or the community in which they live or work. In this case, the community is higher education, and the condition is the student's culture or the color of their skin. We have all developed various forms of social capital from childhood, but the greater U.S. society functions with White culture's social capital. It is the social capital that holds power within the habitus. According to Bourduei (1989), habitus is the sphere that links individuals to social structures and vice versa.

Some of the stories in familial capital share elements of social capital; due to the relationships of the individuals and groups, social and personal development grow from social interaction to be as strong as and feel like family connections, as we learned through Lynn's experience at IU that was recounted in the "Familial Capital" section of this chapter. But all social interactions will not end up that way, and some social capitals are hindered by those who have the largest population within the social structure. Many PWIs develop campus environments and programs without Black graduate students in

mind, an issue that is shared in PK–12 education. When schools or universities do not

recognize or value one's culture, they can have an everlasting negative effect on a

student, as Angela shared in her story.

> I went to private school my whole PK–12 career. I was the only Black student in
>
> my class throughout my entire elementary, middle school years. So, the only
>
> interaction I had with Black people was when I was at family gatherings. Even
>
> my friends outside were White. So, my mom says she intentionally put me in
>
> those kinds of schools so that I will be more educated. I guess she thought I would
>
> have a better education if I were with White people. In high school, there were a
>
> few of us. There were about seven Black girls in my class, not very diverse. And
>
> it was the same in college. My whole life, I have learned amongst White-
>
> populated spaces. I wanted to go to Spelman College, but my family thought I
>
> would not do well there, and I attended Stephens College instead.

 Angela's educational experience illustrates that, although she went to all-White

schools much of her educational career, she still feels like she is "the other" from a social

and cultural perspective. Angela's social capital was defined through her experience

within White education, and it affected her family's views that she would not do well at

an HBCU.

Calla's story highlighted that even if a student is doing well academically, the

lack of social capital and support can affect their success.

> My first grad school experience was okay from an educational perspective;
>
> however, the social aspect was much different. First, it is expensive. And I felt
>
> like the university promised me all this stuff. But suddenly, because I didn't get it

in writing, they're like, "Oh, well." And I changed bosses. My original supervisor

left. The response I received from the university: "Oh, well, we don't know why

she would promise you that. We don't pay for that." Sadly, I end up paying for a

lot of stuff out of pocket and taking out more student loans than I ever expected to

be able to afford graduate education out there. When we presented our concerns

about our experience as Black students, the response was we shouldn't bite the

hand that feeds us. And because we had a graduate assistantship, White people

were helping us, you know, I guess, financially, that we cannot bite the hand, and

this was told to us by Black people. Their message to us was, "Bury your head in

the sand and get the work done." So, I and a few other Blacks, even a few White

students, were super mad at that. Then we became close. Even some of the Asian

students expressed their frustrations but didn't know how to approach the

situation as our experience became quite hostile and not supportive.

Calla's first graduate school experience showcased the importance of ensuring

that universities support the whole student, not just the academic. Not valuing the

experiences of students—in this case, Black students—disrupts their ability to be

successful. Helen Ruth shared how she pursued social networks with other Black students

across the university and, in the process, developed a social group.

I've developed strong bonds with Black women across the university because,

unfortunately, within my program, there's not enough support. So, I built

relationships with Black women in other Ph.D. programs, such as

communications and film, across different departments, and that's been both

fulfilling and challenging because it takes a lot of labor.

Through this network, I created a formal process to welcome new Black

students in with an official welcome dinner. I advocated for funds in my program.

In the beginning, we funded the program with our own money. But I was like,

"No, fuck that; we're not doing that anymore. We're not using our own money to

do the work that they should be doing. Like, they're already lucky that we're

willing to do recruitment and retention efforts as students." So, I reached out to

the dean, the student affairs office in my program, and now they're giving us

$2,500 this year. It's split between three different affinity groups. I'm grateful to

have developed relationships with other Black Ph.D. students across the country

as well, who I can talk to about real things, and it's hard to explain to people who

don't share your same ethnicity. They could probably hear our conversation and

think, I understand what they're talking about, but there's a particular connection

that exists when you're both Black folks.

Helen Ruth constructed her social network, which is excellent, but having a

university truly invest in supporting their minority students would be even better. If

universities were more aware of the harmful effects of ignoring social issues, Rachel

would be less likely to say, "I exist in this department feeling like the other, among

others, and feeling like I don't belong among people who already feel like they don't

belong." Or there would be fewer stories like Mali Dickerson's, who questioned if she

should be in college.

I remember dealing with a lot of insecurity and imposter syndrome, especially

during my freshman year at Northwestern. And it was around my writing. I didn't

feel like I wrote as well as other folks. I didn't feel like I had as many experiences

as other peers. But I mean, I persevered, and I feel like it just got better and better

with time. I think a big part of my ability to persist in undergrad was finding the

African-American Studies department. So, I became an African-American Studies

undergrad major. And in that space, the classes were more diverse racially and, I

would say, I don't know, but I would also say more socio-economic diversity.

And there were mostly Black faculty. I was interested in African-American

history and all that stuff. But I also think, looking back on it, that it was a measure

for me to feel safe and be in a place where I was seen and validated on a campus

where initially I felt invisible.

Mali Dickerson's story is all too familiar and seen throughout American history.

Blacks struggle to find a place where we feel safe and valued, which can hurt our

academic performance by not allowing us to confidently believe in our academic

abilities. Whether it is battling educational inequality, knowing and feeling that society

undervalues Black lives, being looked at as suspicious simply when riding in a car or

walking down the street, or being shot in the privacy of our own homes by law

enforcement, nevertheless, we continue to be resilient and strive to press forward and

encourage others to do the same.

Social capital is a key element that intertwines most often with the other capitals.

If it were not for social interactions with my friends at the University of Missouri, I

would not have remained in the program during the loss of my parents and other personal

issues. Their encouragement and support, from making me laugh to singing little songs

with me, put a smile on my face and encouraged me to press forward and remain

resilient. There were a few faculty members who were just as instrumental in encouraging me during these rough emotional times.

Lynn shared her story of the social connection she had with her advisor while obtaining her master's degree at IU. Her advisor pressed Lynn to succeed.

> I think having the advisors that I did played a part because Black advisors talk to you in a way that is completely different than a White advisor. They are more real, open, honest, and they will make you work harder. I remember working on my graduate thesis. At the time, I was going through a lot of rough situations. I was dealing with the loss of my grandmother, the woman who raised me, dealing with the difficulty of being a single parent to a six-year-old son, you know, single-parent issues. And thoughts were going through my mind, such as "Am I going to find a job when I complete this degree?" and a whole bunch of other things. I was discussing this with my advisor at 3 a.m. via email. She wrote me several pages of what I needed to do, how I needed to get myself together, basically, "Get your life together." She was right! We ended our conversation with her saying, "I need for you to know that, whatever you're going through, you need to come to me." She was not speaking as an advisor to advisee but as a Black woman to Black woman. In this conversation, we were sisters. When you enter higher education, you need people that will look beyond your fellowship, a member of a cohort, or you're just an advisee but views you as part of their community.

> Therefore, I said I had a great experience. I mean, yeah, my advisor cussed me out a couple of times, but here's a person who had faith in me, my champion, my cheerleader, and I can't make her look bad. Now, other people who walked

into the classroom, I didn't care. But when you see that African American, the

Black family, we know you've gone through some stuff. I'm going through some

stuff. We got to make each other look good.

Lynn's story is an exceptional example of social capital gradually intersecting

with familial capital, but it also highlights the importance of seeking mentorship. It

illustrates that faculty and advisors must recognize that we need their mentorship, both

personal and professional, in our academic journey, helping us navigate through higher

education's political and social structures.

Mali Dickerson's and Lynn's stories illustrate how social capital correlates with

the development and growth—or the lack thereof—of the other five capitals. Two key

factors that make social capital important in the development and growth of the other

capitals are that social capital increases one's ability to interact with others and enhances

one's feelings of belonging. One, it shows how Black graduate students remain

associated with the communities and people involved in their past and present academic

careers and personal educational accomplishments. Two, Black graduate students engage

in and develop relationships with people involved in their academic careers and personal

goals based on the types of supports they receive in the process of becoming successful

students. In Lynn's story, due to the support and sense of belonging her advisor offered in

their interactions, her advisor became a big sister to her, which transformed their social-

capital connection into a familial-capital relationship. Mali Dickerson's perception that

her writing skills were deficient and her experiences with imposter syndrome and

alienation on campus affected her social capital. It was only in the African-American

Studies department that Mali Dickerson found solace and a sense of belonging. Having

confidence in one's social capital plays a huge role in how one navigates academia and develops navigational capital within higher education, as it is a social institution.

Navigational Capital

Navigating through higher education can be challenging, and even more frightening in a Ph.D. program. Steering through a space designed for rich White men as a Black graduate student is very problematic. Yosso (2006) defines navigational capital as students having the abilities and capacity to navigate social institutions, which includes higher education. But to truly navigate, one must be able to read the maps and talk the language of the society in which the social institutions are housed. Such a journey involves aspiration, linguistic, and social capitals. For many Black graduate students, any navigational skills that they might lack are not missing from higher education alone but also missing from PK–12 experiences (Bowman, Comer, & Johns, 2018). Calla expressed this situation in her story concerning her PK–12 experience and her writing skills.

> I participated in a summer bridge program called the Groups Program at Indiana University. They were bringing students in the summer before their freshman year to get acquainted with the institution, take a few classes to have a better understanding of how college classes were financially or where the bookstore was, how to get your books, things of that nature. We also took prerequisite classes, such as English 101, something like that, to get it out the way. And then we took one fun class. It was intense, and not everybody made it, but most of us made it through. Thankfully, I had friends that helped me because I had a hard time with my English papers. Sometimes, even the math was complicated, but my

English papers will come looking rough. The teacher will say, oh, you need to

break this paragraph better or construct your thesis better or something like that. I

don't understand what she's talking about again because, in AP English class in

high school, we watch Oprah rather than writing. That was a difficult transition

for me that first summer. But gratefully, I have peers who had mastered English

courses at their schools who would sit me down and help with my papers, read

over them before I would turn them in.

Calla utilized the social capital she had developed among her peers to help her

navigate and grow as a writer, enhancing her linguistic capital. At the beginning stages of

my dissertation, some of my friends and I would meet at the student union and write

together. We read one another's papers to ensure that each one was clear and concise. By

doing so, we not only increased one another's linguistic capital but also developed a

strong support system, one that moved beyond being colleagues to become familial

capital. Academics is not the only area that students must navigate, as Mali Dickerson

expressed in her story of moving from one community to another.

I'm originally from Houston, Texas, and I lived in a suburb called Missouri City.

The majority population there was Black. It was a middle- to upper-class

community, and my pre-K and kindergarten classes were predominately Black.

During my transition to the first grade, my dad got a job in Dallas. So, we moved

from Missouri City, which is a part of the Houston area, to Allen, Texas, which is

about 30 minutes outside of Dallas, a predominately White suburban community.

So, I show up to school in the first grade. I don't know if my parents just were so

busy or whatever, but I didn't realize I was going to school with White people.

Before this event, I had little exposure to predominately White spaces, like

church, school, and community. I didn't know I would be only one Black person.

But kids are resilient, and I made friends.

Although Mali Dickerson's story was situated within her PK–12 experiences, it

highlights how many Black students feel when they attend a PWI. I remember walking

from the parking garage to the College of Education's building at the University of

Missouri during the 2018 spring semester. I wanted to see how many people would

converse with me as I walked along the way, who would take the time to respond to my

greeting. I encountered about 10 people, all White. Not one responded to my good

morning or hello. Some looked me dead in the face and just kept walking. It was not until

I entered the building that one of the college professors responded to my hello. One could

look at this experience as a one-time event or think that those particular individuals did

not want to interact with anyone at that time. Sadly, this happens to me more often than

you would think. However, the culture within higher education has not always welcomed

Black students with open arms, and in today's climate, the negative narratives still exist.

But we must be resistant to oppression and resilient in our efforts to be viewed and

valued as equals.

Resistance Capital

I had to learn how to value the knowledge that I bring to academia. PWIs might

not know my expertise, so I must show the similarities between my skills, experiences,

and passions and those of people who are different than me but are sharing the same PWI

culture. Illustrating why one's knowledge is valuable and why others, particularly people

who enjoy the benefits of Whiteness and other power structures, need to know it and

value it can be taxing. The culture of education in America, from PK–12 and on to higher education, is structured on Whiteness. According to DeVore (2013), "Real educational reform will happen only when we can acknowledge the current necessity of cultural capital (which in the landscape of American education is Whiteness and property as Whiteness) to succeed" (p. 99). Those in power at PWIs do not value the knowledge that Black graduate students bring from their childhood, the areas they have lived, their experiences, and other cultural and community traditions and lessons that form our heritage and sense of self (Nichols, Kotchick, McNamara Barry, & Haskins, 2010). As a result, we deliver valuable insights and cultural wealth derived from a legacy of resisting oppression in communities of color, all while being resilient to ensure that our intellect is valued. Lynn shared her frustration and how it affected her outlook as a Black graduate student.

> As a Black Ph.D. student, I'm questioning why we do this education thing. I question what we learn because I'm dealing with some issues where using data to deal with these issues is nonexistent. I deal with racial issues on my campus in the field that I'll want to be in, and I try to stay. I understand your research, understand your data. But tell me, how do I make students feel comfortable in a racist system, where they are dealing with the visible signs of racism? The data is not going to help me with this. I'm just getting a doctorate because they say I need one. But it's not going to help me do my job any better. I know the language. I know the language. But if you stay in the field long enough, you learn that automatically.

Lynn's statement is the gist of my whole dissertation: How do Black graduate

students deal with it? How do we get through? How can we not only maintain our ability

to be successful but also retain our sanity? And how can we stay true to ourselves without

exporting ourselves, from both an intellectual and social standpoint, so far from our own

true selves and into a culture that is not ours to shape or share equally, as so many have

done before? So many Black academics have changed their position and character to the

point that, when they look in the mirror, they are unrecognizable to themselves and to the

people they were previously before entering that higher education space. The following

stories illustrate how we can make a difference, but it involves resisting the negative

narrative, having a clear understanding of the greater picture, growing from every

experience, and remaining resilient in one's efforts to make a change. Calla experienced

this firsthand as a resident assistant (RA) at IU.

> I worked as an RA while at IU. I had a supervisor, a Black woman. . . . She was
>
> great. But we had got into a little bit of an argument because she would take up
>
> for some of the White students who are also resident assistants. Yet, she will be
>
> harder on the Black students, and I told her, "But you don't understand what these
>
> White students are saying behind your back and how they're doing other stuff and
>
> how the Black students are standing up for you. But you want to be best friends
>
> with the White students!" I never understood what she was doing in that process.
>
> So, we had a bit of an argument. And I was like, I want to finish up my time. I
>
> don't work for you anymore. I don't want to talk to you or see you; Black woman
>
> exits out my life. Years later, when I was in grad school, I wrote to her and
>
> apologize for my behavior. Yes, that's how long it weighed on me. And her

response was, "I completely understand. I was always taught to keep my enemies

closer. It may have looked like I was befriending the White students, but I was

keeping my enemies closer because I need to know both sides of what's going on.

Especially as it relates to my job and how it affects the Black students that I work

with."

Calla's lens was not able to see the whole picture, which is why mentoring and

support in building navigational capital is so important. The struggle gets hard, and

sometimes those who are on your side will not share the playbook. Calla's social capital

with her supervisor was damaged because she lacked an understanding of her

supervisor's navigational and social capital. Although they were able to reconcile their

differences as time passed, her supervisor could have set up a meeting to mentor Calla.

Students who receive mentorship can utilize those lessons and apply them.

Helen Ruth shared how she used her social and navigational capital to resist the

negative narrative and empower her voice and others.

While attending UC Irvine [University of California, Irvine], I became, like,

President of the BSA (Black Student Association), an RA. I was super, super

involved across campus, super active in terms of social justice causes on campus.

It's important to value the manner minority and international students develop

their consciousness and engage in spaces of resistance, particularly in multiracial

spaces where people have a lot of presumptions about [what] their experience has

been and whether or not they experienced oppression and you know all that stuff.

So, I think, as you can probably hear through my life experiences as a

Black/Japanese American woman, I didn't get a lot of support in it. But I've had

to piecemeal my support from different faculty at different universities.

Resistance capital is more than resisting oppression. It is also having the

knowledge and skill sets necessary to cultivate behaviors that change inequality and

empower one's self to speak with strength, confidence, and belief in one's intellectual

abilities. It is the ability to marshal the elements found in aspirational, linguistic, familial,

social, and navigational capitals. Melissa put this into practice by not giving the struggle

any of her energy.

Being a Black woman on a PWI campus, I try not to think about it in those terms

of race because I think those things can become stressors. I don't always want to

doubt or question my ability. And so, it's always there. It's not that I'm not, you

know, not ignoring it. It's just. It's always there. I try not to give it too much

energy. Some students make comments. Particularly White students make all

kinds of comments where you sometimes must respond, let them know that what

they said was very inappropriate or—and it was racially insensitive. And I think

that comes with the territory and working with people who are different.

Melissa is right. You cannot give power to the struggle or negative notions that

affect you or things that you cannot control all the time. Still, you can control the way

you perceive it and react to it using various components of the Community Cultural

Wealth Model , whether working in tandem or individually. The capitals correlate with

our experiences and stories and highlight the resiliency Black graduate students

exemplify through our cultural knowledge and cultural wealth that we bring from our

culture, communities, families, and lived experiences. But Yosso's (2005) Community

Cultural Wealth Model does not capture all our skills and all the capitals that we have.

Additional Capitals in Black Graduate Students' Lives

Everything in people's lives is not distinctly categorized, which lends perfectly to my

reason for using narrative inquiry as the lens to look at the whole of participants' stories.

Narrative inquiry highlights the messiness of all of this, whereas other methods might not yield

such rich data and variety, because narrative inquiry shares first-hand accounts of life

experiences from a personal context. That said, breaking apart the participant's stories for

analysis was needed, to provide views of the Black graduate student's experiences from various

angles and how different capitals intersected. In the preceding analysis, we saw how familial

capital intersects with social and linguistic capitals and how navigational and social capitals

intertwine. We also saw how these intersections of the capitals can develop from both positive

and negative experiences.

In addition, the analysis began to highlight other capitals not mentioned within Yosso's

framework, specifically what I call Embodied Capital and Spiritual Capital. These capitals don't

fit neatly within Yosso's framework but are present and could be within the framework as they

are based on cultural production, which Levinson (2011) defines as "The making or meanings

and identities by acknowledging social actors in contexts of structured power" (p. 115). Future

research should further examine how these two capitals align with that definition.

Embodied Capital

Embodied capital refers to how individuals internalize traditions and resources

that are foundations of their communities and heritage and how individuals use these

attributes when responding and interacting with various situations. It involves

incorporating all aspects of one's education, no matter where it comes from, including

from one's community, schoolhouse, or personal experiences. Some scholars view this

idea of "embodiment" through Performance Theory or how we express our internalized

attitudes and or behaviors. Goffman (1969) describes Performance Theory as the manner

we interact with society. The clothes we wear, the way we communicate, the food we eat

are part of a performance that connect with the perception we have of ourselves and

others within a social group and society. It is through our embodied capital that

participants found support for their choices in higher education, and shaped the way they

viewed themselves within their communities, families, and social groups.

According to Madison (1999)," Performance is hard work, but he enters

performance as a witness and does" (p. 108). Madison's self-reflection on performance

also illustrates his embodied capital and how his performance activates it and allows the

world to see what he brings to the table. Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth

Model captures the value and knowledge students bring to school from a cultural

perspective. But it does not consider the ways students internalize these capitals from a

personal, family- and community-heritage perspective and implement them within their

daily lives at the university. It does not reflect the positive and negative aspects of these

capitals and how such elements may affect students, depending on how they are shared.

For example, Rachel's story concerning her self-doubt over asking questions in

class stemmed from the traditions and experiences that she lived, which emanated from a

cultural perspective of not questioning adults. Rachel's story is an example of how

cultural knowledge with negative narratives harms the student, rather than supports the

student. The linguistic capital that Rachel had developed in childhood to help her be a

successful member of her family (i.e., the skills to not raise questions but, instead, to find answers another way) was in direct opposition to the (white) linguistic capital she needed in her Ph.D. program. It was Rachel's embodied capital – something that was a resource as she was growing up in her home, but not a resource valued at the university – that gave rise to her hesitancy in asking questions, impacting her performance, both educationally and socially. Recognizing and, if needed, reshaping this type of embodied capital (from both the perspective of the student and higher education educators) is vital to enhancing Black graduate students' resiliency.

Spiritual Capital

Spiritual capital is defined by Lin (2007) as capital that is generated through the affirmation and nurturing of the intrinsic, infinite spiritual value of each human being. Meanwhile, I describe my spiritual capital as an outward expression and concrete belief from a personal perspective—connecting to God through faith and prayer on a personal level and then using that connection to influence my social views and interactions. Spirituality is a core element in the lives of Blacks students as it's intertwined in the fabric of the Black community's identity spanning generations (Mattis & Jagers, 2001). There are many scholars such as Taylor, Chatters, and Summer (2001), Arnold and Brooks (2013) and Douglas, Freeman Jr., and Denham (2019) who have discussed the topic of religion and Spirituality from a Black community, Black student/professor, and educational leadership perspective. Eight of nine participants referred to their worship and prayer as an essential component of their resiliency, one that encouraged them to persevere.

Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model does not dig deep into Spirituality but briefly mentions its influence within the African American communities. But spiritual capital empowers resiliency within some Black and Brown students and their communities resistant to the negative narratives they encounter daily (Park, Dizon, & Malcolm, 2020). Pérez Huber (2009) identified spiritual capital as the vital capital in relation to Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model viewing as a crucial part of the Black and Brown communities. As they said: "Indeed, this study found that familial, linguistic, social, resistant, navigational, and spiritual forms of capital were rooted in a profound belief that these forms of capital could be utilized to transcend the students' current circumstances" (Perez Huber, 2009, p. 715). However, Pérez Huber believes it did not fit neatly into Yosso's initial model, but I do. Park, Dizon, & Malcolm (2020) supports my position by stating, "Spirituality, religion, and spiritual capital intersect with familial capital in two key ways. First, familial capital fostered within the home is often intimately tied to Spirituality and religion for people of color" (p. 134). These intersections are in my participant's stories, as well as my own. Nevertheless, Perez Huber and I both agree that spiritual capital was a key component in supporting the resiliency of this study's participants and my own.

For example, my faith in God is one of the most important capitals in my life and often fuels the other capitals in various ways. Believing God will provide my needs strengthens elements of my aspirational capital. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13, NKJV). From this biblical message, I believe that God will give me the strength and wisdom to achieve my academic and life goals, which connects to navigation and the social capital intersection with spiritual capital. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct

thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6, NKJV). Praying to God for direction and understanding supports my navigational capital as I steer through life. Do I make some wrong turns, yes, but my spiritual GPS (God's Protection Service) always gets me back on the right path (Psalms 121, NKJV). I am getting excited thinking about His grace and mercy; I feel like writing a sermon! But Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar and the things that are Caesar, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17, NKJV). So, let us summarize chapter four and connect the dots.

Connecting the Dots

I enjoyed the interview process for this study, the way our conversations and relationships just clicked. I often thought, "Yeah, we connect." It was like visiting Black/African-American communities in different parts of the country, and we just clicked because of shared experiences. Combining the participants' stories provided a critical lens into the experiences that Black graduate students face at PWIs and was the primary focus of this scholarly personal narrative inquiry. The participants' accounts offer implications for research, training, and theory. In reviewing my participants' stories and my own, I discovered that many of the cultural capitals work in tandem with one another at different times and scenarios in everyone's life.

For instance, cultural capitals can work independently sometimes, or all of them can work at once, simultaneously, without a moment's notice. Many of the participants' stories had overarching themes; here is an example of how the capitals worked together. Calla developed aspirational capital by excelling in math in her PK–12 career. That capital was built up, in part, by the social capital that she had established with what she called her "great math teachers." Her aspirational and social capitals worked in tandem to nourish her resiliency. When she arrived at college the summer before her undergraduate

program, she had to draw on navigational capital to figure out how best to address what had been a deficiency in the writing skills taught in Grades PK–12. Her navigational aptitude was the essential component of her cultural wealth, the key ingredient that told her to rely on social capital to grow beyond the failings of her PK–12 education and to persevere at her university. Calla said of the transition between high school and college, "Thankfully, I had friends that helped me because I had a hard time with my English papers." The intertwining of these cultural capitals, along with embodied and spiritual capitals, is a unique phenomenon, one that is illustrated within the participants' stories.

The 10 Black graduate students featured in this study showed that just because one person may have a positive experience from aspirational capital or navigational capital, another may have negative results. Nevertheless, I believe, through our ups and downs in life, that we can be resilient by valuing who we are from a cultural and intellectual perspective and amplifying the narrative from the inside out in everything that we do!

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I briefly shared my story as a Black graduate student and the various

challenges that I have encountered, both personally and professionally. Chapter 2 reviewed the

historical circumstances, empirical literature, and theories that frame this study. Chapter 3

illustrated the research design, and Chapter 4 highlighted the participants' stories and experiences

at PWIs. In Chapter 5, we are going to have a discussion and draw conclusions from this study's

research, but with a twist. Chapter 5 is a video interview! Why? This approach provides an

opportunity for me, the interviewer, to be interviewed and to share why this research is essential,

plus it is something new and a great way to share the information; not everyone has access to the

full dissertation. How did I do it?

- First, I started with thinking about what I wanted to say to the audience to whom I

  am writing to and ensure it is accurate and authentic and relatable to a broad

  audience.

- Second, I worked with my committee to develop questions, referring to my data

  as a guide to those questions. I came up with four core questions (see below).

  Looking back, I would also ask my participants what they would want to say in

  the "conclusion" and add that to my video as well.

- Third and most importantly, I sought out someone who was willing to support the

  interview/video process. For me, that was Dr. Kevin Brown. We shared ideas and

  I listened to his input, which enhanced the project significantly. I advise anyone

  interested in this kind of process to make sure the person/people you work with

  are invested in your project, for it should be a team effort. Dr. Kevin was a great

  supporter and partner on this project, and his interest in seeing me succeed is

evident in the final design. Plus, it was fun, and I learned a lot what goes into

making a video, the importance of lighting and about myself. During this process

I developed an interest in making videos as I created the opening and closing

credits for the project.

- Fourth, I tried to be creative and not afraid to try new ideas as I also stayed

  focused on the overall goal of your project.

- Finally, if you try this approach, I encourage you to believe in yourself and the

  research/ project you are presenting, and do not be afraid to revise, rerecord, and

  adjust to ensure it is a good representation of your work and who you are.

The visual interaction of the "Chapter 5" recording took my narrative inquiry project to

another level. With the help of Dr. Kevin Brown, who filmed, directed, and produced the video,

and posed as the interviewer, my video Chapter 5 answered these four questions:

1. Can you relay a story that shows the intersection of Yosso's cultural capitals within

   the resiliency of Black graduate students? (Review the main ideas found through this

   study's data analysis.)

2. What did you learn about Yosso's cultural capitals through this process? Do you have

   any recommendations for Yosso's theory? (Explain the theoretical implications of

   this study.)

3. What do you think PWIs can do with these stories? What do they need to improve?

   How can these stories give them ideas for how to improve? (Describe the practical

   implications of this study.)

4. What kind of research is missing from this project? What are its limitations? What should your next research project be? (Finally, here I will discuss research implications.)

This video not only presents the discussion and conclusion of my research but also connects the reader and author in a new way, giving readers a chance to see and hear why this research is important. Click on the link below, watch, listen, and share. This video is available on YouTube link below, which lets us continue the discussion beyond this dissertation. I invite you to leave comments, and I will respond to the best of my ability, allowing this dissertation to evolve from a monologue to a dialogue.

YouTube Link: https://youtu.be/mqvAPcbcSGY

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE VIA QUALTRICS

English	▼

Consent Form

Thank you for your interest to participate in a research study conducted by Jason McKinney for the completion of his Ph.D. requirement at the University of Missouri. With permission, this pre-interview questionnaire goal is to obtain personal and education information; specifically, this research study considers the following questions within the social and cultural contexts that Black graduate students face on PWI (Predominately White Institution) campuses.

·   How do Black graduate students persist through higher education?

·   What develops and fuels the resiliency of Black graduate students amid the various struggles they face?

The following Qualtrics survey will include questions that ask you to describe how you identified (race and gender), educational history, years in your Ph.D. program and area of study. Participation in this survey is voluntary. It will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete the pre-interview questionnaire. We would appreciate it if you could respond to the inquiry before March 10, 2019. After which we will schedule a 90-minute Zoom video interview recording as soon as your available. Your identity is protected as we will utilize pseudonyms.

Information shared within the questionnaire will be handled confidentially, but we do ask for your name and contact information so that we may contact you about sharing specific information that might be identifiable (e.g., your experiences will have a significant impact on this study and shared in the findings). Additionally, data from the questionnaire may link with information from interviews. Overall, we believe there is little to no risk associated with participating in this study. Potential benefits may include additional self-reflection on your academic journey and its positive influence on current and future Black graduate students.

Jason McKinney serves as the Principal Investigator. If you would like to participate, but have concerns about any identifiable information being shared, please contact the Principal Investigator, Jason McKinney M.Ed. jasonmckinney@mizzou.edu; (618)306-4045, to discuss the specifics. Survey information will be stored in Qualtrics and a secured Box folder for seven years following completion of the study.

To proceed to the first question, please check the box below that indicates your willingness to participate in the study at this time. As a reminder, if you respond to the survey, you may withdraw that information at any time before completion of the study.

○ Yes, I wish to participate at this time.

○ No, I do not wish to participate at this time.

Student Recruitment Block

Please enter your first name and last name in the form below.

First Name Last Name

Gender

○ [_____] Please indicate

your gender.

How do you identify in term of race and/or ethnicity? For example, do you identify as Black American, Afro-Latino, or Black.

☐ [_____] Race and/or Ethnicity, Identity

What city and state are you born?

Were you a first-generation college student, meaning you were the first in your family to obtain a 4-year degree?

Are you in an Ed. D or Ph. D program?

☐ Ph. D

☐ Ed. D

What year are you in your doctoral studies? (eg. 1st, 2nd 3rd or 4th)

○ Year in studies

Are you an Ed. D/ Ph.D. candidate, meaning have you proposed your dissertation yet?

○

○

Yes No

What were your previous majors/degrees and the university obtained?

○ Previous degrees and

universities

Have you attended an HBCU is your higher education career? If yes, bachelors, masters, or both?

○ [_____]

○ Yes

○ No   Click to write Choice 1

Briefly tell me about your research focus.

[_____]

Did you earn your bachelor's and /or master's degree from an HBCU? If yes, where and what was your major?

[_____]

What is your email address?

[_____]

What is the best daytime telephone number to reach you at?

[_____]

What is the best evening telephone number to reach you at?

[_____]

Please leave any additional information that you would like me to know in the space provided below. (Optional)

[_____]

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

☐ Talk me through your educational journey and what factors contribute to challenging/adverse

experience?

> a) Tell me about a challenge you faced in graduate school (e.g., experiences, race, culture, and gender)?
> b) How is the challenge affecting the student self-perception (e.g., lack of skill or experience)?
> c) What external factors outside the college courses and social structures are relevant (e.g., health issues, economic variables, and personal life-changing events)?

☐ Reflecting on your experiences what actions/ methods were used to solve the challenges/

overcome adversity?

> a) Was the initial strategy effective? Why?
> b) What personal resources did they use?
> c) What personal skills were key to solving the challenge/overcoming adversity?

☐ Regarding your personal and professional life, what external resources/ strategies worked and

what did not?

> a) Did you connect with senior Black graduate students for guidance?
> b) Was administrative staff accessible for guidance?
> c) Were there any special programs available in the university available to help?
> d) How important was community (parents, friends, social groups) during this process?

☐ Tell me about your professional growth? (listen for details to develop a follow-up). o What do

you attribute this growth to?

☐ How do you define success and share a few significant moments you felt made you successful

as a Black graduate? Possibly have them exchange some examples when they felt their resiliency

lead to success.

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