ARTICLES

Academic Success of African American Males in a Historically Black University

Freeman Raymond Irvine III [1]

Abstract

The present study investigates and identifies the factors that contribute to the academic success of African American males in a historically Black university. Understanding how some African American males succeeded academically might help to inform educational officials about the strategy to assist struggling African American male students. The study was an investigation of lived experiences and motivating factors for the academic success of 10 participants. The findings offer African American males, especially those falling behind academically, an opportunity to discover strategies, tools, and approaches for being academically successful. The findings also indicated that social support, especially familial support, was essential to the academic success of African American males. Other contributing factors were the positive influence of teachers, mentors, and peers, as well as resilience perceived by the participants.

Keywords Academic success · African American males · Historically Black University · Social support · Resilience

Introduction

Statistics pertaining to the academic success of African American males are undeniably upsetting. In 2008, 36% of African American adult males were in prison, while only 5% were enrolled in college (Lewis et al. 2010). In 2011, only 57% of African American males graduated from high school (Sellers 2011). African American males are less likely to graduate in 33 states in the USA as compared with other ethnic groups (Thomas et al. 2012), and high school graduation rates for minority males regularly fall close to 50% (Sellers 2011). African American females are more likely to complete high school and obtain a college degree than their African American male counterparts (Khumoetsile-Taylor 2002; U.S. Census Bureau 2011; White 2009). The burden of

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✉ Freeman Raymond Irvine, III

1   105 Gimlet Drive, Madison, AL 35756, USA

many African American males is indeed heavy. According to Baldwin (1983), the racially repressive environment that permeates America, "make so many fail" (Baldwin 1983, 71).

These alarming statistics, trends, and statements may cause many African American males to believe that they cannot succeed, creating a negative self-fulfilling prophecy. Despite these alarming problems, some African American males still overcome statistical odds and obtain academic success. The study uses the phenomenological method to enhance a greater understanding of how some African American males succeed academically, which offers other African American males an opportunity to understand how they can excel in an academic environment.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate and identify the factors that contributed to the academic success of African American males at a historically Black university (Steppes 2012). The intent was to combat the negative image perpetually portrayed by the mass media against African American males by exemplifying their academic achievement. Utilizing the phenomenological method, the perceptions and lived experiences of 10 African American males were examined. African American male students at an undisclosed historically Black University were interviewed using semi-structured telephone interviews. Participants selected were solely African American males who had successfully enrolled at the undisclosed historically Black university. The social implications of this study are significant in that the information will profit educators, policymakers, activists, and parents interested in crafting conflict resolution mechanisms for African American males.

Background of the Problem

The factors influencing the academic failure of African American males can be explicated by structural and cultural theoretical frameworks. Structural theorists mainly focus on systemic conditions, such as neighborhood conditions, racism, socioeconomics, the educational system, and insufficient health care (Jordan and Cooper 2002; Lee and Ransom 2011; West 2001). Structural theorists propose solutions such as rehabilitation of a dilapidated environment, application of government initiatives, school reformation (particularly schools in the inner city), increased funding for affirmative action and employment, and the introduction of well-being or education programs (Lee and Ransom 2011; West 2001). On the other hand, cultural theorists focus on aspects such as personal laziness, irresponsibility, immorality, and behavior to understand the educational outcomes of African American males (Jordan and Cooper 2002; Lee and Ransom 2011; West 2001). Cultural theorists also propose resolutions such as self-help programs and Black business expansion. Both structural and cultural factors are impediments to the academic mobility of African American males; however, many African Americans still succeed despite the gloomy background that influences their academic failures.

Furthermore, Rolland (2010) mentioned that many African American males were discouraged with the American educational system, which perpetually attempted to ostracize them, eradicate their community, and limit their accomplishments, causing a negative self-fulfilling prophecy (Tauber 1997). An absence of self-worth and relative deprivation, that is, frustrations from unsatisfied desires/want, often thrusts an

individual toward external and internal conflict (Folger et al. 2009). This is a process that could affect many African American males.

Theoretical Framework

The resiliency theoretical framework is used to investigate why certain youth become functional adults in society despite risk exposure experienced in life (Zimmerman 2013). This theory focuses on the positive factors that counter the exposure to risks. Promotive factors (assets and resources) are the positive factors that assist youth in overcoming the negative experience of risk exposure (Fergus and Zimmerman 2005). Throughout history, African American males have exhibited great resilience. Johnson (2012) credited resiliency as the factor that assisted many African American males to counter racism and cultural, personal, and societal stumbling blocks in life. Further-more, several studies, e.g., Reynolds et al. (2010), Williams (2011), and Parker (2002), found that resiliency was a contributing factor for the academic success of African American students.

Methodology

Research Design

Qualitative research investigates a problem or a social phenomenon (Creswell 2007) through emerging non-statistical qualitative research methods. Qualitative findings typically grow out of open-ended interviews that invoke descriptions (Rubin and Rubin 2005) regarding a participant's experience, belief, outlooks, and remarks concerning the phenomenon under examination (Patton 2002). The qualitative phe-nomenology is defined as a "research strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon" (Creswell 2009, p. 13). Phenomenology seeks to comprehend the mutually shared feelings of participants. In the present study, the phenomenon is high academic achievement; the specific phenomenological method is presented in the data collection and analysis section.

Participants in the current study were chosen through purposive sampling, a type of nonprobability sampling whereby the researcher selects participants based on a deter-mination of which participant would be beneficial or representative to the study at hand (Babbie 2004). Participants were solicited through snowball sampling, in which "the researcher collects data on a few members of the target population, then asks these individuals to provide information required to locate members of the population whom they happened to know" (Babbie 2004 p. 184).

Data Collection and Analysis

The perceptions and lived experiences of 10 African American males were examined by utilizing the phenomenology method. Data were gathered through individual telephone interviews; the simplified version of Hycner (1999) phenomenological explication process, as presented in Groenewald (2004), was used. Hycner's explication

process was the following: (1) bracketing and phenomenological reduction; (2) delineating units of meaning; (3) clustering of units of meaning to form themes; (4) summarizing each interview, validating it, and where necessary, modifying it; and (5) extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews to make a composite summary.

Instrumentation

A demographic survey and semi-structured telephone interviews were utilized in the current phenomenological study. Interview questions were designed to elicit lived experiences of the factors that contributed to academic success. In the demographic survey, the ethnicity, age, gender, religion, educational level, neighborhood status, caregiver's socioeconomic status, and an educational level of participant's parents were collected. The demographic survey was helpful in developing a profile of the participants.

Ethical Issues

According to Moustakas (1994), "all human science researchers are guided by the ethical principles of research with human participants" (p. 109). In ethical principles, a researcher is guided by universal ethics that include honesty, justice, and respect (Edwards and Mauthner 2005). These principles were strictly followed in this study.

Confidentiality

All participants were protected, and pseudonyms were assigned in all steps of the research process, even though some participants elected not to use a pseudonym but instead wanted their first name revealed. For confidentiality purposes, the name of the university was not disclosed. The university selected was among the best historically Black universities and produced numerous scholars and many African American doctoral degree recipients. The historically Black university was ultimately chosen because of the success factors associated with the school, which made the likelihood of finding highly competent, successful, and overachieving African American males more likely.

Demographic Data Summary

Ages of the 10 participants were 18 to 28 years, and all participants confirmed that social support was a factor for their academic success. The highest level of education for most participants was a high school diploma while one participant had a master's degree.

Major Reoccurring Themes

The reoccurring major themes were identified as common expressions and accounts regularly exhibited by the participants. Thus, the themes are common factors participants identified as influential to their academic success. The seven major themes that

emerged from this study were family support, observation of others, religious and spiritual faith, encouragement from teachers, mentors and peers, resiliency, strong work ethic, and trials or obstacles.

Family support was the only common theme that all of the participants credited as a contributing factor for their academic success. The participants' families encouraged them and guided them onto a path of academic success. Family members, whether parents, siblings, uncles, or godparents, played influential roles in the participants' lives. Observing others were another factor that caused the participants to be academically successful. Seven of the 10 participants revealed that observing someone else helped them; at specific points in the participants' lives, they were positively influenced by observing other individuals.

Religious and spiritual faith was a factor in the academic success of five of the 10 participants. Attending church, speaking to a pastor, reading the Holy Bible, and observing other church members who succeeded academically, influenced the participants religiously and spiritually. Seven of the 10 participants also reflected that a teacher, mentor, or their peers influenced their academic success. The mentors were identified as family members, tutors, church members, and many other individuals.

Resiliency was another major component for the academic success of eight of the 10 participants. Resiliency caused them to be unflappable, never quitting despite academic hardships and personal challenges. A strong work ethic was another factor that contributed to the academic success of many participants. This theme was evident in seven of the 10 participants. Finally, the trials or obstacles the participants experienced contributed to their academic success. Participants learned valuable lessons from their hardships, lessons that encouraged and motivated them to become academically successful.

Findings and Implications

Succeeding academically was important to all the participants. Family support greatly benefited all the participants, without it, their academic success might have been hindered tremendously, which was a point some participants expressed. For the participants, their families were motivators, instructors, mentors, and their confidant during difficult times. At specific points in the participants' lives, they were positively influenced by observing others. Some were motivated by their parents' decision to return to school as an adult, and others by their peers' or family member's perseverance to become academically successful. Most participants believed that if the individuals they observed were academically successful despite the odds, they could be academically successful as well. Other participants were motivated not by the positive example of others, but rather a negative example. These participants observed the negative outcomes of those who did not pursue the academic path, and they were determined not to suffer the same fate. One of the participants named Jamal expressed that he saw many in his community "dying, going to jail, on the street corner." This encouraged Jamal not to pursue the same path. Jamal stated, "I desired to be different, go to school, better myself, and be able to give back to the community and change things around."

Religious and spiritual faith was important for some participants as this was the contributing factor for their academic success. Religious and spiritual faith served as a coping mechanism, a refuge to turn to in difficult times, which gave them an inward desire to persevere. Their religious doctrine provided them with hope and

encouragement and solidified their beliefs that they could be academically successful. For others, religious faith was the moral compass that encouraged them to stay out of trouble and undesirable circumstances, enabling them to avoid mistakes that could have impeded their academic progress.

Encouragement and support of teachers, mentors, and peers positively impacted the participants. Teachers in the school system encouraged many participants to set the proverbial bar high in terms of their academic goals and never to quit. Mentors were identified as family members, tutors, church members, and other individuals. Such mentors helped them to make wise decisions with their coursework. Peers influenced participants by offering positive competition; observing the success of their peers was influential because they were encouraged to likewise become academically successful.

Having a resilient attitude greatly benefitted the academic success of the participants. Resiliency played a critical role in how participants responded to difficult situations, how they believed in themselves, and how they persevered to academic success. They viewed their challenges, whether academic or non-academic, as hurdles they would eventually overcome. Resiliency also helped participants to cope with conflict and recover rapidly from any impediments to their academic success. For many participants, a strong work ethic also contributed to academic success. A strong work ethic was an influential factor for transcending racial and social barriers. Participants forced themselves to make necessary sacrifices to succeed academically, such as refraining from extracurricular activities and parties, or anything that could detract them from studying in school. Most of the strong work ethic exhibited was cultured from either a family member or mentor.

Lastly, all participants experienced trials or obstacles that could have prevented them from being academically successful. Some of the trials or obstacles were self-inflicted, such as associating with negative friends who did not value education and who negatively influenced some of the participants. A common trial or obstacle experienced was being raised in a poverty-stricken environment and attempting to succeed academically in America's harsh inner cities. Nevertheless, most participants mentioned that they learned valuable lessons from their trials or obstacles, and they were grateful for their experiences, which they eventually overcame. Religion, engaging in extracurricular activities, tenacity, and self-belief and identity were some other aspects that helped participants persevere through their trials or obstacles.

Support for resiliency theory surfaced. The promotive factor is an aspect of resiliency theory which focuses on the positive factors that aid youth in overcoming risk exposure-assets and resources are two types of promotive factors. Assets refer to the internal factors (e.g., self-esteem) that assist individuals in countering risk exposure while resources refer to the external factors (e.g., social support). Many of the participants in this study were born in inner-city areas whereby they had to be mentally tough to survive. Some of them were also football players, a sport that fosters mental toughness (Hosseini and Besharat 2010). Being raised in an inner-city and playing football were assets that stimulated resilience in the participants and were influential factors for countering their exposure to risk.

Many participants reflected that their parents influenced their resiliency. One participant named Jayeonte reiterated that when he was in a stressful situation at school, he remembered the words of his mother saying, "You better not quit." Many participants iterated similar statements, revealing that social support was the external factor (resource) that countered their exposure to risk.

Practical Implications

Educators, policymakers, activists, and parents can use the findings to help African American males attain academic success, possibly increasing the rate at which they graduate from college. Social support, especially familial support, was a primary contributing factor to the academic success of African American males in this study. Other studies (Jensen 2011; Lewis and Hilgendorf 2011) also find a relationship between family support and academic success among African American male students, implying that familial and parental involvement in the child's schooling at an early age is necessary (Vygotsky 1978). Cuyjet (2006) stresses this point, "familial support structures for African American male students develop during their precollegiate matriculation, and these structures are carried forth into their postsecondary experiences" (p. 29). The research findings as it pertains to social support also implies that there should be unremitting cooperation between schools and families on a personal level and that schools should use this cooperation to assist students, particularly if the student resides in a hostile environment and lacks social support.

Moreover, teachers, mentors, and peers were the contributing factors to the academic success of the participants. Other authors also revealed that teachers (Klem and Connell 2004), peers (Booker 2006), and mentors (Richards 2007) contributed to the academic success of African American males. Most importantly, teachers were the major contributing factor in a student's academic success, suggesting that teachers should be encouraging, empathetic, and sensitive, perform the role of mentor when necessary, and foster high expectations for their students. Moreover, teachers should encourage African American males and guide them to a more fulfilling life.

Religious and spiritual faith was also a contributing factor in participants' academic success. Because the association was not overwhelming, more research is necessary concerning the impact of religion and spirituality on academic success. Resilience is also a contributing factor in participants' academic success. The resilient individuals possessed strong personal characteristics that enabled them to cope with their circumstances and persevere to academic success. For example, (Parker 2002; Reynolds et al. 2010; Williams 2011) found that resiliency was a contributing factor to the academic success of African American males. Consider the Bonner and Bailey (2006) statement, "resilient students develop positive behaviors that improve their chances of being successful in school despite their membership in an at-risk group" (p. 33). Thus, this study supported this statement because resilient participants were able to overcome difficult odds, and perseverance was the only option if they wanted to become academically successful; quitting was not an option for them. This study also supported Bonner and Bailey's (2006) statement regarding resilience and academic success:

> Resilient students are found to engage in behaviors that correlate with higher levels of self-esteem than those students who do not exhibit engaging behaviors—coming to class and school on time, being prepared for and participating in class work, expending the effort needed to complete assignments in school and as homework, and avoiding being disruptive in class (p. 34)

Furthermore, this study benefitted the field of conflict analysis and resolution. A majority of the participants mentioned that they utilized a coping mechanism to help

them cope with their trials, obstacles, or negative experiences in life. Whatever the situation, the participants in this study never quit when hardships arose, they used their coping mechanism to persevere. Most of the participants mentioned that resiliency, their religious and spiritual beliefs, and having a social support source in which they could confide, such as a family member or mentor, were coping mechanisms they utilized in the process of attempting to be academically successful. This finding highlights the need for all individuals in the education continuum to promote conflict resolution practices to students.

This study offers immense contributions to the lives of many African American males. According to Noguera (2008):

> While it is true that many Black males are confronted with a vast array of risks, obstacles, and social pressures, the majority manages to navigate these with some degree of success. The good news is that most Black males are not in prison, do not commit suicide, and have not contracted HIV/AIDS. These facts do not negate the significance of the problems that confront Black males, but they do help to keep the problems in perspective. Understanding how and why many Black males avoid the pitfalls and hardships that beset others may help us devise ways to protect and provide support for more of them (pp. 20-21).

This study fulfills the research need posited by Noguera (2008), assisting in understanding why certain African American males avoid pitfalls that others experienced, and it provides a path for creating means/mechanisms to support the academic success of African American males. Since the participants were academically successful, unsuccessful African American males would be inspired by the lived experiences of the participants and could replicate their successful methods. Moreover, African American males could be inspired by the success stories of the participants because they could learn from their success. As a result, a new self-fulfilling prophecy would be reinforced, in which African American males believe they could also succeed academically. The positive implication of this study is that it will exemplify the academic achievement of African American males, aiding at combating the negative images that the mass media create for African American males.

Furthermore, many factors negatively influenced the academic success of the participants such as associating with negative friends, not taking school seriously, and academic disidentification. Therefore, interventions could be focused on helping African-American males recognize the importance of education and eradicating self-defeating behaviors. Noguera (2008) underscored this point:

> Changing academic outcomes and countering the risks experienced by Black males is not simply a matter of developing programs to provide support or bringing an end to unfair educational policies and practices. Recognizing that Black males are not merely passive victims but may also be active agents in their own failure means that interventions designed to help them must take this into account. Changing policies, creating new programs, and opening new opportunities will accomplish little if such efforts are not accompanied by strategies to actively engage Black males and their families in taking responsibility to improve their circumstances (pp. 22-23).

Recommendations

In this section, recommendations for practitioners are offered, such as educators and policymakers. Parents, activists, and scholars can use the recommendations for practical purposes. African American male readers will be able to glean helpful advice from this section and discover strategies, tools, and approaches to help them become academically successful.

Recommendations for Practitioners Educators and policymakers should promote schooling initiatives and programs that endorse interaction between family and the educational system. Stakeholders should aggressively support the initiatives and design new programs directed toward increasing familial involvement in school. As teachers, mentors, and peers were the contributing factors for the academic success of African American males, schools should incorporate interventions that enhance the academic climate for African American males via teachers, mentors, and peers. When addressing the shooting of Trayvon Martin to the public, U.S. President Barack Obama stated,

> We need to spend some time thinking about how do we bolster and reinforce our African American boys? And this is something that Michelle Obama and I talk a lot about. There are a lot of kids out there who need help, who are getting a lot of negative reinforcement. And is there more that we can do to give them the sense that their country cares about them, and values them, and is willing to invest in them (Obama 2013).

Purposive initiatives should be dedicated to pairing students with teachers to serve as mentors to help African American males achieve academic success. Having teachers serving as mentors has been an effective technique. Findings of the Bowser and Perkins (1991) study revealed that teachers who confided in their students personally and in many instances cared for them like family members enhanced the students' high school experiences (as cited in Bonner and Bailey 2006, p. 32). Thus, educators and policymakers should create developmental mentoring programs and initiatives targeted toward assisting all students, especially African American males. These programs should have the support of stakeholders.

Peer support was also a contributing factor to the academic success of African American males. Educators should encourage peer support by promoting social groups, such as student associations, academic study groups, and the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program. Jerome was one of the participants in this study who mentioned that, in his JROTC program, he met many high-achieving peers who influenced his academic success and with whom he continued to interact.

While religion and spirituality cannot be forced on students to help them excel in school, many similar elements can be incorporated into the school system. For instance, many participants mentioned that their religious and spiritual belief was the principal reason why they decided to live a crime-free life, stay out of trouble, and avoid negative behavior. Schools should attempt to develop a moral code of ethics that encourages students to adhere to the highest ethical standards and character. In this way, schools could implement character education programs that incorporate ethics into the school's curriculum. The curriculum should abide by the school's moral code of ethics (Johnson

n.d.). Moreover, schools should promote resiliency skills in their students. Harvey (2007) provided several methods for fostering resilience in African American male students. The methods included:

> Providing a caring, supportive learning environment in schools; fostering positive attitudes by helping students believe that they can succeed if they try; nurturing positive emotions; fostering academic self-determination and feelings of competence; encouraging volunteerism; teaching peace-building skills; and ensuring healthy habits (Harvey 2007, p. 12).

Recommendations for African American Males As exhorted by the participants of this study, African American males should learn to manage time effectively because the misuse of time produces undesirable consequences. While there is always an occasion for recreational and other fun activities, being academically successful requires much sacrifice. Another recommendation is to establish a good study and work habit because a strong work ethic is instrumental for achieving academic success, and it is a skill that will be beneficial in the academic and professional arenas.

Continually seeking assistance in schools from mentors is critical for achieving academic achievement. However, the majority of the participants stated that males often feel embarrassed to seek help. Regarding this notion, Jerome, a participant of the study, reflected:

> You're not going to know it all, you must be humble, you have to know you don't know it all, and you have to seek help. Many times, we, as males for one, and as African American males; sometimes we do not seek help. We are afraid of seeking help for some reason. We think it is going to make us seem unmanly, or less of a man, so we tend not to seek help when we really need the help. So, I would recommend African American males to seek help and get outside their comfort zone.

Regardless of the situation, it is critical to be resilient in an academic environment and never give up. A common theme was that students should strive to increase their resiliency skills toward achieving academic success. Resiliency skills should be a tool for every student's repertoire. According to Johnson (2012), "resilience is what shapes a young Black boy into a great Black man" (p. 383). Regarding resilience, Jamal, a participant of the study, expressed:

> Never give up. The road is going to get tough, I can guarantee that; it's going to get tough. Nevertheless, you must stick through it and persevere. Also, have a strong mind. You must be mentally and physically prepared for academic success. It will drain you out; it will have you thinking you're going to break down, that it's not for you, but just persevere and think that in the long run, everything will work out for the best.

Johnson (2012) also explained the general characteristics of resilient individuals:

> Resilient individuals "hang tough" when things are difficult; see small windows of opportunity and make the most of them; have deep-rooted faith in a system of

self-transformation; have a healthy social support network; have the wherewithal to competently handle many different kinds of situations and people; have a wide comfort zone; recover from experiences of a traumatic nature; have mental fortitude; stay physically fit, particularly when things get tough; have coping mechanisms in place to deal with stress; faith—have a relationship with God (Johnson 2012, p. 388).

Participants recommended associating with wise friends because they can make you smarter, help you progress in life, inspire you to achieve greater, and be an asset rather than a hindrance to your academic success. Jerome, a participant of the study, stated:

> Beginning with middle school, I did not really understand that who you hang around forms who you were, in a sense. The people you hang around, you are going to end up becoming like them. So, for a little while in middle school, I was terrible, mainly because I hung out with the wrong crowd. As I got wiser, I started associating with better people. Now, I have been able to surround myself with positive thinking people who want to get ahead in life, people who are not okay with just making a C, who really want to achieve. My friends have really helped me as far as the influence of peer groups on my academic success.

Furthermore, African American males should join an empowerment program designed to foster discipline and manhood; posit the benefits of academic success; aid in becoming a productive member of society; and equip its members with an immense communal network. Moreover, African American males should learn from the achievements of other African Americans, especially their notable inventions. Learning from these inventions could foster ethnic identity.

Recommendations for Future Research Future research is required to investigate the academic success of African American males and to understand the method of incorporating interventions into the school system. Potential interventions should be identified and tested in a school setting. More research is also necessary pertaining to how school management can implement conflict resolution in schools to help African American male students develop and nurture conflict resolution practices and skills. Lastly, research is necessary regarding the impact of religion and spirituality on the academic success of African American males.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that African American males can be academically successful; however, the age-old stereotype that African Americans, especially African American males, are intellectually inferior, must be eradicated. The academic success of the participants has demonstrated a potentiality of the academic success of African American males. The study revealed various conditions that could facilitate the academic success of African American males, which can put them onto a path of academic excellence. In the last few years, African American males have been portrayed

negatively in the media. However, this study has demonstrated that not all African American males are criminals or thugs, and they do not deserve the bad reputation they have been given.

Social support, especially support from family and mentors, was a primary contributing factor in the participants' academic success. Results of this study indicated that most participants utilized coping mechanisms to become academically successful. The coping mechanisms include having an attitude of resiliency, upholding religious and spiritual beliefs, and having a social support source to confide in such as a family member or mentor. Support found in the resilience theory may also help African American males. Resiliency skills should be a tool in every student's educational repertoire.

This study is beneficial to policymakers of the educational system because it revealed that the academic success and matriculation rate of African American males could increase if certain conditions factor in the lives of African American males. Educators, policymakers, activists, and even parents should heed the factors that cultivated the academic success of the participants and strive to implement these factors in the lives of their students and children.

Appendix

Interview Protocol

Date:
    Time of interview:
    Location:
    Pseudonym:

Interview Questions

1. To begin, briefly provide a detail about yourself.
2. Did your neighborhood or community influence your academic success or academic ambitions? Please explain.
3. What are some factors that contribute to your academic success? Please elaborate.
4. Did you have any positive mentors in your life? If yes, how have they contributed to your high academic attainment?
5. How did your peer groups influence your academic choices and attainment? Please elaborate.
6. What role did family support play in the achievement of your academic success? Please elaborate.
7. Did religion, religious institutions, or your spirituality have an impact on your academic success? If so, please elaborate.
8. What are some of the trials and/or obstacles you overcame to become academically successful? Please elaborate.
9. How did you cope with these trials or obstacles in the process of trying to be academically successful? Please elaborate.
10. Did your background influence your efforts to graduate from high school and secure admission into college? Please elaborate.

11. What are your recommendations that could be done to help more African American males to be academically successful? Please elaborate.
12. What recommendations could you give to help other African American males on their pursuit of high educational attainment? Please elaborate.

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