

AN EXPLORATION OF THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF PATERNAL WARMTH ON
COLLEGIATE SOCIALIZATION AND ANTI-BLACK EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN MEN

by

ANTRE' MARQUEL DRUMMER

(Under the Direction of Ginny J. Boss)

ABSTRACT

African American males face unique challenges navigating college, where academic rigor is compounded by societal stigmas associated with Black masculinity. Mass media often portrays Black men as hypersexualized, uneducable, and a societal threat (Jackson & Moore, 2006), while Black fathers are depicted as absent or emotionally disconnected (Lovelene & Lohmann, 1978). This narrative inquiry qualitative study explored the perceived impact of paternal warmth on African American male college students' collegiate socialization and any anti-Blackness they may have experienced. The study was framed by Dumas and Ross' (2016) BlackCrit and Weidman's (2014) collegiate socialization model.

Seven Black male scholars, who self-identified as having positive paternal relationships, participated in semi-structured interviews via Google Meet. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that resilience, self-advocacy, emotional regulation, and relationship building were the key social skills learned from their fathers. These skills were crucial in helping participants navigate challenges as Black men in predominantly white spaces and develop their social networks. The emotional support provided by paternal warmth equipped

participants with tools to advocate for themselves and others, build authentic relationships, and confront racial biases in academic spaces. These findings reinforce the significance of paternal relationships in shaping and guiding African American men throughout their college tenure.

INDEX WORDS: Paternal relationships, fatherhood, anti-Blackness, African American male, Black male scholar, collegiate socialization, paternal warmth

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DEDICATION

Antre' Marquel Drummer, II, "Deuce", son, at the age of two, you composed a simple jingle in the backseat of our car as we drove home. There's no way you could have understood the weight and helplessness that I was feeling as it seemed my complete world was falling apart, but melodically, you sang "fight for me, fight for me." You sang that little jingle repeatedly until you fell asleep. Your words gave me the strength I needed to endure—to persevere. Your name—our name means a courageous and brave warrior who fights for what is right! I love you son, and Daddy will always fight for you.

To the men of AAMI, your collegiate presence pushed me to grow as a man, leader, son, brother, and a father. The way you looked to me as a model was sometimes terrifying, as it felt I had no room for error. But life happened, and you came to me as brothers, friends, and mentees, giving me space to be human. I will always keep your stories near to my heart. I am so grateful to have witnessed you men as emerging adults grow into responsible members of society, navigating your own paths. As always, I love you, and We D.R.I.V.E.!

To my son, Deuce, and the men of AAMI, from the AAMI Five (2012) to the AAMI Last Drive (2024) and those to come, I dedicate this work to you. You helped me find purpose in this journey.

Love always,

"Dad", "Big Bro", "Drummer", "Drum", "Old Man."

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small. I still hear your cheers and see the joy in your eyes. So, for you, I'll say it: "Momma, we made it!"

I wish I had the words to share to thank everyone who gave me doses of encouragement throughout this journey, and I am certain that I am missing someone, but please hear my heart and know that I am grateful for you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Background	2
Problem Statement	3
Purpose Statement.....	4
Theoretical Framework	4
Significance of the Study	6
Defining Terms	7
Chapter Summary	8
2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
Parental Warmth and African American Fatherhood	10
African American Adolescent and Young Adult Males	12
African American Young Adult Males and College.....	14
Theoretical Frameworks.....	16
Weidman’s Collegiate Socialization Model.....	16
Black Critical Theory.....	17
Methodological Genealogy	21

3	METHODOLOGY	23
	Theoretical Frameworks.....	23
	Research Paradigm.....	24
	Data Collection	25
	Data Analysis.....	26
	Trustworthiness.....	27
	Positionality	28
	Conclusion.....	30
4	FINDINGS	31
	Participant Demographics	32
	Dad: I Hear You, Need You, and Thank You for Pushing Me	34
	You Have to Want It More.....	35
	When They Don't Care	37
	Building Relationships	41
	A Father's Support and the Security it Gives	44
	Conclusion.....	47
5	DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS	48
	Answering the Research Question.....	48
	Interpretation of Findings	49
	The Findings and the Frameworks.....	50
	Findings and the Literature.....	54

Context	58
Implications	58
Conclusion	62
REFERENCES	65
APPENDICES	
A NARRATIVE QUESTIONS.....	80
B INFORMED CONSENT	83
C PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FLYER.....	86
D QUALIFYING DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE	88
E SOCIAL MEDIA (POST) MESSAGE.....	90
F PARTICIPANT EMAIL RESPONSE.....	92
G PATICIPANT FOLLOW-UP EMAIL	94
H SNOWBALL PARTICIPANT EMAIL.....	96

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Participant Demographic Information	31

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is common rhetoric in the literature, compared to their peers, African American (AA) men struggle to graduate college (Anderson, 2013, Hines et al., 2020). Much of the research on Black men in education emphasizes the barriers and challenges this demographic faces due to the low retention and completion rates (Kim & Hargrove, 2013; McElderry, 2022). There is a broad assumption that all Black men face inevitable challenges that lead to high dropout rates and academic failure (Harper, 2009). In fact, 6-year college graduation rates at four-year postsecondary institutions of African American men (34%) are lower than White (61%), Asian (70%), and Hispanic (50%) men (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Washington (2013) emphasizes that the disparity between Black male college students and their nonminority peer counterparts is significant and points to either discriminatory practices or inefficiencies within the educational system.

This disparity is troubling because a lack of higher education attainment has been linked to many challenges faced by African American men, including unemployment, gang membership, violence, incarceration, and intergenerational poverty (Harris, 2018). However, research indicates that when Black men achieve success in higher education, it creates a powerful intergenerational effect, as their children are more likely to pursue and complete college degrees, also (The Education Trust, 2011). This recognizes the far-reaching impact of providing strong support for Black men in higher education, fostering a cycle of academic success that benefits future generations.

Background

Black males in America experience unique sociocultural challenges, and the contributions of positive development, adaptation, and the lessons they teach their sons are often overlooked or not regarded as noteworthy (Gordon et al., 2012; Cooper et al., 2020). The father-son dyad is of particular importance, given that African American men disproportionately experience social harassment and other experiences with racism (Chavous et al., 2008). Black boys raised without a residential and/or involved father are at greater risk of engaging in criminal or violent activities, experiencing poor school outcomes, struggling with substance abuse, and facing lower psychological functioning (Allen, 2015). These unique sociocultural experiences of Black males make it critical to examine the developmental journeys in their childhood developmental years (Gordon et al., 2012). Therefore, there exists a need to better understand the strategies that African American fathers use to cultivate safe, nurturing spaces and opportunities for their children (Cooper et al., 2020).

In addition to familial relationships, broader societal portrayals of Black men also contribute to the challenges they face in education and society. Media portrayals of successful African American men often emphasize success in sports, music, acting, and comedy—careers that may not necessarily require formal education. These depictions could lead young African American boys to associate wealth, prestige, and success with paths that do not prioritize academic achievement (Anderson, 2013). Scholarly publications and popular media often categorize African American men as a population at risk, frequently using negative descriptors such as endangered, uneducable, dysfunctional, and dangerous to describe school-aged and emerging adult African American men (Jackson & Moore, 2006). These characterizations

bombard Black American men in their youthful years and contribute to the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. It is nearly impossible for these young men to escape this dogma because mass media frequently, loudly, and clearly relays debilitating messages to portray African American men, reinforcing the idea of Black men as societal threats (hooks, 2004). One of the pervasive negative societal images has been that of the Black man as a perpetuator of violence, a stereotype that dates back to his depiction as an animal and brute in the years of American enslavement and continues with modern portrayals as gangsters and thug (Jenkins, 2006). In America, the stereotypical status of menace to society continues to be ascribed to Black men.

For Black male collegians, navigating these cultural realities is complex and daunting. Turner (2020) reported that Black men encounter racial micro-aggressions and negative evaluations of their abilities. However, they often resist these appraisals by focusing on racial uplift, relying on their faith as a coping mechanism and refusing to accept low racialized appraisals. Micro-aggressions, such as racial profiling and hyper-surveillance, occur at intersections of race and gender, where Black men are disproportionately targeted (Allen, 2020). Some African American men choose not to attend college because they anticipate experiencing racism and discrimination that occurs in the workplace and assume a college degree may not protect them from biases hiring practices and promotion barriers due to racist and discriminatory policies (Anderson, 2013). Understanding these challenges leads us to the core problem this study seeks to address.

Problem Statement

The problem is relatively few studies have investigated the effects of parental, family functioning, and environmental factors on the academic achievement of AA male adolescents (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013). Though not a new phenomenon, the underachievement,

exclusion, and regression of African American men in education have re-emerged as pressing issues that demand immediate attention. Societal influences, especially the level at which one interacts with society, play a crucial role in shaping one's psychological development, particularly in the formation of self-concept (Jenkins, 2006). Listening to Black men discuss their lives and experiences offers valuable opportunities to learn how they interpret their life-worlds (Brooms, 2023). However, Black men are often the 'hidden voices' in discourses regarding them (Hunter & Davis, 1994). At the root of this issue is anti-Black racism, which is deeply embedded in institutions, policies, and practices, and shapes both societal thinking and action (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Given the pervasive impact of anti-Black racism institutional and societal contexts, it is essential to examine how Black men navigate these challenges in college in conjunction with the support of their fathers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative study is to explore the impact African American male college students perceive paternal warmth has on their collegiate socialization and any anti-Blackness they may experience. I plan to achieve this purpose using the following guiding research question: *How do AA men describe the role of social skills acquired through paternal relationships in navigating and responding to experiences of anti-Blackness during their collegiate socialization?*

Theoretical Frameworks

This study is guided by Weidman's (2014) collegiate socialization model and Dumas and Ross' (2016) Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit). Together, these frameworks provide a lens through which to explore the dynamic and multi-faceted process by which paternal warmth

shape and influence the experiences and African American male college students as they socialize into collegiate environments.

Emphasizing socialization as a dynamic, multi-dimensional process that includes both formal and informal experiences, Weidman's collegiate socialization model integrates academic and social spheres, as well as the personal growth that occurs through informal interactions that likely take place during the father-son relationships. The informal interactions demonstrate how paternal warmth contributes to the son's confidence, success, and overall engagement in the collegiate environment, highlighting the role of family influence in college socialization. Weidman suggests that parents provide the initial framework of values and attitudes students carry into college, along with ongoing support that impacts their ability to adapt and thrive within the college community. In father-son relationships, paternal warmth plays an influential role. Informal parental interactions help sons internalize resilience and develop social and academic confidence, contributing to both success and engagement in higher education settings. By emphasizing the depth of parental influence, Weidman's model situates familial relationships, particularly father-son interactions, as essential elements that shape a student's identity, drive, and college engagement.

BlackCrit, as conceptualized by Dumas and Ross (2016), extends Critical Race Theory (CRT) by placing a specific focus on Blackness, Black realities and experiences. BlackCrit highlights structural, cultural, and psychological factors that affirm the humanity of Black people, particularly addressing the ways racial injustice is maintained through societal and institutional structures. While CRT interrogates broader conditions of racial injustice (Hatch, 2007), BlackCrit emphasizes the lived experiences of Black people. BlackCrit complements Weidman's model by providing a critical and liberatory approach to crafting counter-narratives

around Black fatherhood. Adding BlackCrit provides a critical lens that acknowledges the structural and cultural factors that influence the college socialization process for Black male students. BlackCrit highlights the importance of countering dominant narratives that often marginalize Black fathers and minimize their roles in nurturing, supporting, and preparing their sons for and navigating in higher education spaces. By integrating BlackCrit, this study aims to reveal Black fatherhood as a powerful force in college socialization. Through this framework, Black fatherhood is repositioned as a crucial, positive influence within the African American male student's collegiate socialization process, challenging societal stereotypes.

The integration of Weidman's (2014) collegiate socialization model and Dumas and Ross' (2016) BlackCrit allows for a more comprehensive exploration of the experiences of African American male college students. Together, these frameworks provide for a deeper examination of how Black male students navigate college through both familial influences and racialized experiences. In combination, Weidman's collegiate socialization model and BlackCrit provide a robust framework for examining how parental influence, paternal warmth specifically, contributes to the college socialization of African American male students. This combined framework enables an exploration of both the structural elements of student development as described by Weidman and the culturally specific experiences of Black father-son relationships emphasized by BlackCrit, creating a comprehensive view of the socialization process shaped by family and identity.

Significance of the Study

Warren (2020) has emphasized that improving education outcomes for young Black men and boys is a national education imperative. The insights gained from this study may offer scholars, practitioners, African American male collegians, and their fathers a better

understanding of the factors that influence their collegiate socialization. Evidence shows that institutional practices within colleges and universities play a significant role in student success (The Education Trust, 2011). Findings from this study can be applied to student affairs, helping to shape policies and procedures that support African American males, enhance African American male-specific initiatives, and strengthen student organization programs. Furthermore, improving cultural competence for the institutional community would foster a more inclusive environment for all parties of the institution, not just African American males. These findings could contribute to counseling efforts by offering opportunities to further educate Black fathers on the impact of their presence and encourage increased nurturance, involvement, and emotional availability for their sons (Jones, 2021).

Defining Terms

African American is used interchangeably with the term *Black* and is increasingly being advanced as a self-referent for Americans of African descent. For purposes of this research, *Black and African American* are used interchangeably (Ghee, 1990).

Anti-Blackness “denotes the positioning of Black people and their cultural practices and knowledge as inferior, sub-standard, or needing to imitate others” (“Cases on Academic Program Redesign for Greater Racial and Social Justice,” 2021, p. 14), and is defined as the beliefs, attitudes, actions, practices, and behaviors of individuals and institutions that devalue, minimize, and marginalize the full participation of Black people—visibly (or perceived to be) of African descent (Comrie et al., 2022).

Paternal warmth is referred to as feelings of affection, connectedness, and worth (Coleman et al., 2019), and evidence suggests that child well-being is more closely tied to the

affective climate created by the quality of father behaviors rather than to the general quantity of these behaviors (Rivera, 2017).

Socialization is defined as the process by which persons acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that make them effective members of their society (Weidman et al., 2014). The American Psychology Association (APA) defines socialization as the process by which individuals acquire social skills, beliefs, values, and behaviors necessary to function effectively in society or in a particular group. Socialization is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and disposition by individuals to become effective members of society (Brim, 1966).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 opened with addressing the educational disparities from the literature that disproportionately affect Black Men. Throughout the chapter, I provided a background of the topic, stated the research problem(s) presented within the literature, and discussed the purpose of my study along with the associated research questions. Additionally, I briefly described the theoretical frameworks I used to guide this research and concluded by defining key terms used throughout the text.

Chapter two will consist of an in-depth literature review that details the views of American society of Black boys and Black Fathers and my theoretical framework, which is the combination of Weidman's Undergraduate Socialization models and Dumas and Ross' BlackCrit theory.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In their study of the enablers of college student retention, Berger and Milem (1999) found that “being Black was the third largest negative predictor of persistence” (p. 657). According to Harper (2009), one of the main factors contributing to the higher attrition rates among Black students is their difficulty in integrating into campus environments, which often differ from their home communities. However, research also emphasizes the importance of social relationships as strong socializing influences that impact student retention. Beyond the frequency of student-faculty interaction, it is the intensity and quality of these relationships that make a difference in the student’s experience (Weidman, 1989). While interactions with faculty and peers positively correlate with academic achievement, Weidman et al. (2014) note that African American students typically enter college with a well-established self-concept, which remains consistent throughout their academic career despite positive and negative interpersonal interactions and integration experiences.

In this chapter, I review the literature that supports the need for my research and show the importance of paternal warmth, examine African American fatherhood, explore the collegiate experiences of African American men, and provide an in-depth knowledge of the theories for which my theoretical framework consists, Weidman’s (2014) undergraduate socialization model and Dumas and ross’ (2016) BlackCrit.

Cooper et al. (2020) report that research has shown that paternal involvement and support have been linked to various positive outcomes, such as emotional adaptation (Dunbar et al., 2015), psychological wellbeing (Bean et al., 2006), and decreased externalizing behaviors (Caldwell et al., 2014). African American fathers’ educational backgrounds, expectations, and

the family structure of African American homes play a more significant role in the academic development of AA males than parenting style and other parental ecological factors (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013, p. 74).

Parental Warmth and African American Fatherhood

A synthesis of Speer's (2021) literature stated paternal warmth can be viewed as an aspect of parenting style as displayed in interactions with the child that denotes the expression of positive affection, admiration, and affect toward the child. Parental warmth is a term commonly used to describe an aspect of the parent-child relationship, and research supports the inclusion of fathers' warmth as a key component of positive father involvement; even though nonresidential fathers may spend less time, on average, caring for their child, the quality of involvement is a key element of positive father involvement (Lee et al., 2018).

Empirical research demonstrated that paternal warmth and nurturance are consistently linked to high levels of paternal/filial identification and are associated with positive psychological outcomes in sons (Marrocco, 2001). Veneziano (2003) posits that paternal warmth is often a more significant predictor of youths' functioning than maternal warmth. In addition, Coates and Phares (2014) suggested that Black fathers with healthier psychological well-being tend to exhibit higher levels of paternal involvement. Research that has specifically explored paternal warmth highlights that children of emotionally engaged fathers or those who demonstrate higher levels of paternal warmth, are physically and emotionally healthier (Wilson & Prior, 2011). In recent decades, African American fathers have been increasingly documented as being actively involved in their children's lives, engaging in roles that include child socialization (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Doyle et al., 2016). However, this increased involvement differs from earlier portrayals of African American fatherhood.

African American Fatherhood

Allen (2016) synthesized the literature on African American fatherhood, expressing that fatherhood is one of many masculine performances for Black men. However, much of the literature on African American fathers has tended to perpetuate a stereotype of absent, nonresidential, uninvolved, and unsupportive. Lovelene and Lohmann (1978) argued that it has been assumed that if the Black father does not live in the same home as his children, he is neither physically nor emotionally accessible to them. Additionally, Black fathers have been viewed as emotionally detached from their children and their families, often demonstrating their manhood in the streets rather than in the home (Butler, 2000).

The scientific literature presents two contrasting views of young African American fathers. Practitioners working with African American families should examine closely their ideas about family roles. The traditional view is that of the invisible father, who provides little or no support for his children (Smith et al., 2005). Although he may not be physically present in the home, this should not be mistaken as evidence that the African American father lacks interest in or contact with his family, because he may still play a significant role in the family's functioning, especially in the eyes of his son (Lovelene & Lohman, 1978).

In contrast, research also highlights African American fathers as spending substantial time with their children (Smith et al., 2005). Their positive contributions and impact on the lives of their children are often grossly underemphasized, especially considering structural and economic challenges they face (McAdoo, 1993).

Davis's (2012) study on African American fathers highlighted positive paternal involvement is related to better social and emotional adjustment in their college-age children. A notable theme (father nurturance and academic attachment) in this qualitative data was the father

giving ongoing emotional encouragement to the student to persevere during challenging academic times. Letiecq and Koblinsky's (2004) research further revealed that African American fathers' concerns about community safety and violence prompted them to engage in vigilant parenting practices such as monitoring peer groups and activities of their adolescent children. These findings underscore the importance of understanding the strategies that African American fathers pursue to cultivate healthy, safe spaces and opportunities for their children. Fathers' unique experiences inform their assessments of the social world, which in turn influences their children's development (Cooper et al., 2020).

Moreover, research shows that fathers' involvement in discussions about race and culture is motivated by a desire to help their sons navigate racialized experiences (Anderson & Stevenson, 2018; Coard et al., 2004). Father involvement has been identified as a significant factor contributing to the success of African American children, fostering positive psychosocial, behavioral, cognitive, and academic achievement outcomes from toddlerhood through late adolescence (Davis, 2012).

African American Adolescent and Young Adult Males

“Perhaps more than any other group in our society, America (indeed the world) has a love–hate relationship with Black males. The ‘love’ aspect of the relationship is exhibited in the way mainstream Americans embrace a variety of cultural forms that are either designed or dominated by Black males. When we look at the ‘hate’ aspect of this dichotomy, we see African American males as ‘problems’ that our society must find ways to eradicate. We regularly determine them to be the root cause of most problems in schools and society” (Ladson-Billings, 2011, p.8).

In many societies, children are generally recognized as innocent and in need of protection. However, Black boys are frequently denied the assumption of innocence and recognized as responsible for their actions at the same age White boys benefit from it (Goff, 2014). This phenomenon, termed adultification, is a form of dehumanization that strips Black children of the inherent innocence associated with childhood (Epstein et al., 2017).

Adultification perpetuates the false narrative that Black youths' misbehavior is intentional and malicious, rather than the result of typical childhood immaturity (Epstein et al., 2017). Dominant cultural images depicting Black men as endangered species or criminals contribute to this dehumanization, depriving Black boys access to a childhood free from negative assumptions and humanity (Dancy, 2014).

Goff (2014) found in a study of 264 predominantly White, female undergraduates that Black children were perceived as less innocent than other children in every age group beginning at age 10. Black boys get labeled as adults who are scary, criminals, intimidating, and in need of policing (Dancy, 2014). By the end of their adolescence, Black males have been stopped by police, followed by store security, and have heard the locking of a car door as they passed for no other reason than they are young, Black, and feared (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006). The perception of Black adolescent males as threatening, underachieving, and hyper-masculine is reinforced through media outlets and psychological research that portray them as a monolithic group rather than individuals with diverse identities (Buckley, 2017).

Educators often view Black boys as having low intelligence and inherently deviant; which leads to their exclusion from advanced courses by school counsellors, racially profiled by school administrators, and disproportionately disciplined in accordance with 'colorblind' school policies (Allen, 2013). These negative stereotypes profoundly affect African American boys,

who must continuously regulate their behavior to conform to institutional norms to succeed and prove their normalcy (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006; Allen, 2013). However, this is a difficult challenge because Black male students experience unique ‘racial’ and ‘gendered racial’ micro-aggressions at all stages of their educational journey (Allen, 2020). According to Dancy (2014), “efforts to deconstruct oppressive environments are salient for Black male achievement, retention, and the elimination of stereotypes. Black boys deserve the same and equal opportunities as any student group, to feel entitled to institutional resources deemed good institutional practices” (p. 53).

African American Young Adult Males and College

Some African American men who choose not to go to college, do so because they are aware of the perceived racism and discrimination that exists in the workplace. They assume that it would be pointless or futile to go to college because they believe they would not escape discrimination and not get hired or promoted due to racist or discriminatory practices that could hinder their chances (Anderson, 2013). In Brooms’s (2023) synthesis of the literature, he found that research studies focused on Black men’s college experiences continue to highlight ongoing challenges that undermine their educational goals and desires. Allen’s (2020) findings revealed that Black men attending a predominantly white liberal arts university experienced a range of micro-aggressions that included racial profiling and hyper-surveillance by faculty, staff, and students. These men often their frustrations with racial isolation, distancing, and stereotyping.

Academically successful Black males are often viewed with suspicion, sometimes labeled as cheaters when they produce intellectually sound results. In group projects, typically they are the last to be selected as a research partner. Black males are considered the most stereotyped group on campus and society. These stereotypes are often detrimental to their educational

aspirations, achievements, and the ability to receive proper teaching and mentorship (Smith et al., 2016). Davis's (1995) qualitative study linked Black masculinity with negative stereotypes. According to the study, Black men often felt pressure to conform to the stigmas associated with Blackness which included being hyper-sexual, athletically inclined, and the over usage of urban colloquialisms in their daily vernacular. The idea that Black males must prove their identity by embracing these stereotypes stem from the roots of adultification, However, no correlations were found between these characteristics and the attainment of academic honors, leadership roles, or consistency in high profiles on campus status.

Theoretical Frameworks

Weidman's (2014) undergraduate socialization model focuses on the socialization process of undergraduate students within higher education. The socialization processes include interpersonal, intrapersonal, and integration dimensions, and can vary according to both individual characteristics and the range of experiences students encounter (Weidman, 2014). The combination of Weidman's (2014) undergraduate socialization model and Dumas and ross' (2016) BlackCrit places central focus on the collegiate socialization specifically of Black males.

Socialization

Socialization refers to the transmission of values, beliefs, and ideas around lifestyles, derived from cultural knowledge necessary for adequate functioning within society (Harrison et al., 1990 as cited in Thomas & Speight, 1999, p.153). Yosso (2005) noted social institutions in the United States were historically shaped by overt racism the years of the twentieth century. Although racism is more subtle in the twenty-first century, it continues to impact institutions of socialization, leaving researchers, practitioners, and students continuously searching for the tools to analyze and challenge the impact of race and racism (Yosso, 2005).

Weidman's Undergraduate Socialization Model

Weidman's undergraduate socialization model has been widely used throughout higher education research. Initially developed in 1989, Weidman's model examines the impact of college experiences on undergraduates, focusing on normative contexts and social relationships to explain socialization processes before and during the college experience (Weidman, 1989). Investigating how college students become socialized to their roles and whether they have congruence with the values and norms of the established institution is another broad area of socialization research (Weidman, 1989). The undergraduate socialization can be conceptualized as a series of steps in which the student enters college with pre-existing values, career aspirations, and personal goals; then is exposed to various socializing influences throughout their college tenure. These influences include normative pressures exerted via social relationships with faculty, staff, and collegiate peers, as well as parental support and pressure from achievement expectations. Students assess the importance of these factors in shaping their knowledge and orientation toward career goals, leading to changes or reinforcement of the values they held upon entering college (Weidman et al., 2014).

In Weidman's (2014) model, socialization primarily occurs through interpersonal relationships (peer and faculty interaction), intrapersonal development (study habits and attending lectures), and integration (engagement in campus academic and social life), which are key factors that influence the socialization experience of undergraduate students. Paternal warmth directly impacts these dimensions by fostering emotional security, which positively influences students' ability to form connections with peers and faculty.

In their research, Venezia and Jaeger (2013) highlighted the stressors associated with the college transition, including academic pressure, forming new social networks, handling

responsibilities that comes with autonomy, managing finances and student debt, and developing emotional intelligence. Paternal warmth can act as a protective buffer against these stressors, as students often internalize the support messages and behaviors of their fathers, which shape the development of their own beliefs and coping strategies (Suizzo et al., 2016).

Further exploration of interpersonal relationships show that the peer interactions are significant for the socialization process (Weidman & DeAngelo, 2020), as they increase the likelihood of institutional attachment, a result of peer motivational support (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Additionally, faculty members who present themselves as approachable and supportive, positively impact Black students. However, barriers to student-faculty relationships persist due to historical legacies of exclusion, discrimination, and the persistence of White normative standards that lead to overt and covert racism (Weidman et al., 2014).

Intrapersonal development refers to the internal processes that help students navigate academia successfully while in college. Paternal warmth fosters a positive self-concept and healthy attitudes towards learning, which are essential for developing effective study habits, time management, and attending class, all of which are key aspects of intrapersonal development and necessary for students to thrive in college (Schreiner et al., 2020). Collegiate integration necessitates both social and academic participation, which is reflected in the way students engage content, participate in courses, and involve themselves in campus organizations to build support systems (Weidman & DeAngelo, 2020c).

Critical Race Theory - BlackCrit

Critical Race Theory (CRT) examines how race and racism are foundational elements in shaping historical and contemporary social structures and social experiences (Hatch, 2007). CRT emerged in the 1970s and 1980s from the work of Derrick Bell and other legal scholars, lawyers,

and activists who recognized advances of the civil rights era had stopped and in some circumstances were being reversed (Free Speech Center, 2024). Derrick Bell, a civil rights attorney, argued that racism was deeply rooted in the foundational makeup of American society and despite all successful waves of reform within the country, racism persisted and continued to reassert itself. Seeing the many legal disparities around race, Bell argued that in America, racism is permanent, and his ideas laid the foundation for what is now recognized as Critical Race Theory (Cobb, 2021).

Sawchuk (2024) stated that CRT is recognized in one of two ways: a way of understanding how American racism has shaped public policy or a divisive tool that pits people of color against White people. While CRT serves as a tool to analyze race and racism in general, it was originally designed to address institutionalized racism, particularly against Black people. However, CRT does not specifically focus on anti-Blackness, which is central to understanding how racism uniquely affects informs and facilitates racist ideology and institutional practice towards Black people (Dumas & ross, 2016).

BlackCrit was born out of a desire to explore these “more detailed ways” that Blackness continues to matter, and to highlight how a theory of race cannot account for what it means to be racialized Black in an anti-Black world (ross, 2019). BlackCrit centers on the specific history of anti-Black racism in America and acknowledges the historical and contemporary types of anti-Black violence that Black adults and children have experienced domestically and globally in and beyond schools (Bryan, 2023). BlackCrit is composed of these key ideas: (1) anti-Blackness is endemic to American society; (2) Blackness exists in tension with neoliberal multiculturalism; and (3) Black liberatory fantasy is necessary (Bryan, 2023).

Anti-Blackness

Anti-Blackness is not used here to only refer to racism against Black people; rather, anti-Blackness is used to signal the broader antagonistic relationship between Blackness and the possibility of humanity (ross, 2019). This is best developed in 'Afro pessimism' where Black people are seen to exist in the social imagination as slaves, property, with no right to live, a suspect already targeted for death and social death, people who only live in "the afterlife of slavery", with a future that is impossible to imagine (Dumas & ross, 2016).

Blackness versus Neoliberal Multiculturalism

Neoliberalism was established in the 1980s, an ideology where everyone is supposed to focus on economic prosperity or economic growth, and it is now assumed that racism is no longer a barrier to equal opportunity (Dumas & ross, 2016). Dumas and ross (2016) also argued this ideology places the blame for failure on groups themselves, on their own choices, and not the systems that subjugated them. This framing recognizes the trouble with (liberal and neoliberal) multiculturalism and diversity, both in ideology and practice, in that they are often positioned against the lives of Black people (Dumas, 2016; Sexton, 2008; as cited by ross, 2019).

Liberatory Fantasy

Ross (2016) posits that we should create space for Black liberatory fantasy and resist a revisionist history that supports dangerous majoritarian stories that disappear whites from a history of racial dominance, rape, mutilation, brutality, and murder. Freedom from colonial ideology is not free of the possibility of pandemonium (Dumas & ross, 2016).

Combined Framework

The combination of Weidman's (2014) collegiate socialization model and Dumas and ross's (2016) BlackCrit supports the purpose of this research by facilitating the exploration of paternal

relationships among Black men who are currently enrolled in college or have graduated.

Weidman's model provides a framework to help understand how students become socialized in college environments through various stages, recognizing that successful socialization often builds upon, rather than replaces, students' home backgrounds. Berger and Milem (1999) emphasize this distinction, highlighting that students who integrate into the academic and social subsystems of college do so because of, not at the expense of, their familial foundations (p.661). Rucks-Ahidiana and Bork (2020) further summarize research supporting the critical influence of family, showing that students' home environments continue to provide essential values and support systems that enable success in collegiate environments.

This integration of home and college environments is particularly important when examining the experiences of Black male students, for whom paternal relationships often serve as vital sources of confidence and cultural grounding. Thus, Weidman's model contextualizes how paternal warmth and support can provide a foundational framework that students draw upon as they adapt to collegiate environments. When a father is a positive figure in the student's life, this relationship can serve as a foundation for familial support and empowerment (Davis, 2012). Examining these paternal connections from the perspective of the African American male students may reveal how they utilize skills and values gained to navigate and thrive within college.

BlackCrit, as conceptualized by Dumas and ross (2016), compliments this framework by centering the unique realities of Blackness and the ways Black fathers prepare their sons to confront anti-Black experiences. Paternal warmth in this context is recognized as both a personal influence and mechanism through which Black fathers use skills developed through their own racialized experiences to prepare their sons to navigate anti-Black experiences of their own

(Anderson & Stevenson, 2018; Coard et al., 2004). BlackCrit's focus on Blackness enables an intentional examination of how paternal relationships challenge and reshape the dominant narratives that often marginalize Black fathers and downplay their roles in supporting and nurturing their sons in college. This asset-based perspective positions this study to highlight paternal warmth as a critical factor in the success of Black males, contrasting with deficit-based research that often centers on college attrition, gang violence, hyper-masculinity, and hyper-sexuality among Black men.

In combination, Weidman's collegiate socialization model and BlackCrit provide a robust framework for examining how parental influence, paternal warmth specifically, contributes to the college socialization of African American male students. This combined framework enables an exploration of both the structural elements of student development as described by Weidman and the culturally specific experiences of Black father-son relationships emphasized by BlackCrit, creating a comprehensive view of the socialization process shaped by family and identity.

Methodological Genealogy

Narrative inquiry was first used by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) in education to recount the personal stories of teachers. Narrative inquiry is the "study of experience as a story" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The types of data used in narrative inquiry are recognized as field texts and include photographs, field notes, conversation transcripts, and interview transcripts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry was chosen for this study because stories serve as models for understanding life. Heilburn (1988) stated that we live our lives through texts. Whether written, spoken, or experienced, these stories shape individual experiences. Despite the method of arrival, these stories have molded us all.

Some studies that have used interviews of the same target audience have asked participants the following type questions to assist in building their narratives:

- What role has your father played in your decision to attend college?
- Describe the values of being “cool” in college.
- What do you think it means to be a successful student at this school?
- How do Black collegians at PWIs use narrative to express their liberation through their participation in hip-hop consumption?
- What socialization experiences do two-year college transfer students describe after their transition to a four-year university campus?

These questions and similar studies provide a strong foundation for exploring the lived experiences of African American men during their college journeys. My study makes the research more robust because it delves deeper into how participants perceive Black male father-son relationships impact or has impacted the collegiate socialization of AA men currently in or have graduated college. Through the narratives shared by participants, this research aims to broaden the literature on this topic and raise awareness of the significance Black male father-son relationships and the impact those relationships have on the son’s collegiate socialization.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

“Underachievement, lack of inclusion, and backward progression of AA men within the educational arena has resurfaced as a trend that demands immediate attention” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 127). African American fathers experience unique social challenges because of their disproportionate risk for social harassment, which heightens the importance of understanding the strategies they use to create healthy, safe spaces within a seemingly unwelcoming society is needed (Cooper et al., 2020).

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the impact African American male college students perceive paternal warmth has on their collegiate socialization. The research question guiding this study is: *How do AA men describe the role of social skills acquired through paternal relationships in navigating and responding to experiences of anti-Blackness during their collegiate socialization?*

In this chapter, I reiterated my theoretical framework, provided my positionality statement detailing how and why I am connected to the research, described my research design, described my research site, provided an overview of the data collection process, described how the data was analyzed, and provided my reflexivity statement explaining the trustworthiness of my research.

Theoretical Frameworks

This study was guided by Weidman’s (2014) undergraduate socialization model and Dumas and Ross’s (2016) BlackCrit. According to Rucks-Ahidiana and Bork (2020) off-campus relationships with family and friends provide personalized support and motivation, yet on-

campus relationships provide general and impersonal relationships about policies and procedures and mediocre support because they are predominantly distant.

Weidman's collegiate socialization model was used to explore the engagements of on-campus relationships. Critical Race Theory has been widely applied in higher education to explore the racial oppression experienced by students of color face (Gomez et al., 2011; McCabe, 2009; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso, Smith, & Solorzano, 2009; as cited by Pelzer, 2016). Specifically, BlackCrit (2014) helps explain the marginalization and devaluation of Black individuals, even within celebratory discourses on race and diversity (Dumas & ross, 2016).

Research Design

Narrative inquiry is the research design that was employed to explore the role of paternal relationships in the educational experiences of African American males. Participants are restricted to African American males, aged 18 – 50, who are either currently enrolled in college (having completed at least two full-term semesters) or have graduated college. Eligibility requires both the participant and his biological father to identify as African American. Full or part-time enrollment classification are both included.

Being that the focus of this study is on the impact of biological father-son relationships on college socialization, participants must have or have had a positive relationship with their biological fathers during their college years. For the currently enrolled students, this relationship must be ongoing, while for graduates, it must have been positive during their time in college. A positive father-son relationship is defined by the participant's perception of his father as loving, protective, and actively involved, aligning with the concept of paternal warmth (Gürkan et al., 2021).

To maintain a specific focus on biological paternal influence, the study excludes other male figures such as uncles, cousins, older male siblings, mentors, and stepfathers. By concentrating on biological father-son dynamics, this study aims to deepen the understanding of how perceived paternal warmth uniquely impacts the educational journeys and socialization process of Black male college students.

Research Site

All data for this study was collected from Black males who are currently enrolled in or have graduated from a 4-year college or university in the southeastern region of the United States.

Data Collection

Participants of the study were gathered by email invitation (see Appendix B), social media (Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn) recruitment (see Appendix C), and student referrals. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was employed, in which I began with a small number of initial contacts (seeds) who fit the research criteria and were invited to become participants in the research. The agreeable participants were then asked to recommend other contacts who fit the research criteria (see “Research Criteria” in Appendix B) and who might also be willing participants, who then, in turn, recommend other potential participants (Parker et al, 2019). It is worth mentioning that snowball sampling does run the risk of influencing the results by introducing unexpected or uncontrolled factors because participants could refer to participants who share similar beliefs or experiences (Noy, 2008, p. 166).

Data for this study was gained from up to 60-minute semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A) with seven participants. Each interview was manually coded using auto-transcription software (Google Meet). Verbatim transcriptions were used to enhance the richness

of the study, such that every pause, stutter, and filler word was captured. Narrative questions (see Appendix A) were developed around the father-son relationship and collegiate socialization. As Doyle (2016) noted, the quality of the father-son relationship can shape a son's future socialization, particularly in terms of how fathers teach their sons about how race influences their lives. Fathers' awareness of the role race plays may influence their sons' perceptions of race and its potential impact on their future educational experiences, career choices and opportunities, and life outcomes. Though this is not a predictor study, the stories shared by the participants may give further insight as to ways paternal relationships can assist in improving college socialization of Black males.

Data Analysis

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) highlighted that narrative should be viewed as a whole and does not therefore require theming or categorization, rather, they suggest focusing on threads within narratives to uncover meaning. However, the inductive method was used to assist in the analysis. The inductive method for narrative analysis involves deriving themes and patterns directly from the data without preconceived categories or theories. This approach involves line-by-line coding to identify initial patterns and develop codes based on the emerging themes (Abbadia, 2023).

Initial Coding: The first step in the analysis was initial coding, where the data was reviewed to establish beginning themes. Initial coding offers a starting point of exploration and helps determine the potential direction of the data (Smith, 2021). It also allows for the researcher to deeply reflect on the contents and nuances of the data, beginning the process of ownership in the research (Saldaña, 2016).

In Vivo Coding: The second round of coding is In Vivo coding, which is also recognized as verbatim coding, literal coding, or natural coding (Saldaña, 2016). This method emphasizes the actual spoken words of the participants and is noted for its ability to offer a sense of nuanced meaning that may not emerge from other forms of coding (Manning, 2017).

Narrative Coding: The final round of coding is narrative coding, which is useful for examining personal and social experiences to understand the human condition through story telling. As Hatch and Wisniewski (1995, p. 2, as cited by Saldaña, 2016, p. 132) suggest some stories should be accepted as legitimate ways of knowing without the need for critique or theory. This approach focused on analyzing participants' social positions, interpretations, and personal experiences to craft their narratives (Chase, 2005).

Trustworthiness

My roles as Associate Professor of Mathematics and African American Male Initiative coordinator allows me to have consistent access to potential research participants. "Get in" is a term used to describe the researcher's access to the participants and the site (Fontana & Frey, 2000 as cited by Davis, 2009). My roles allow me to "get in" to the site, and because I have been an active and engaged faculty and staff member for over a decade, I have established credibility and rapport with the research participants. Though I have established rapport, I will not allow it to have me blindly think that equates to established trust. Trust was established through informal conversation, listening, and allowing participants to guide the conversation while adjusting to their needs (Fontana & Frey, 1998 as cited by Davis, 2009).

I am aware that my experiences may introduce biases into the research process. For example, my role within the academic institution may make it easier for me to empathize with certain aspects of the participants' experiences, while potentially overlooking others. As a father,

I may inadvertently project my own expectations or aspirations onto the narratives of the participants. Thus, to mitigate my own biases, it is imperative that I constantly and consistently evaluate myself to ensure I am relaying the narratives of the participants to ensure their voices are heard and their stories told.

Positionality

When I observe myself in the mirror, I see a man—a man that the United States identifies as a Black man. Though I often hoped that the hue of my skin, mixed with my maleness and masculinity would not matter as I navigate life, my reality is that it does. I find peace and chaos in both my maleness and so-called Blackness, but these identities do not define who I am. I am grounded in a Christ-centered worldview, which is loving God with all my heart, strength and might, and loving my neighbor as myself. Daily, I strive to diligently live my life according to biblical principles.

My developmental and adolescent years consisted of poverty and domestic violence. My perceptions of manhood were shaped by an abusive stepfather, an absent biological father, and a preacher who loved me into his family. The societally portrayed barbaric and absent Black male were my prominent figures. My father relocated to California when I was two years of age. I believed my father to be a good man because of stories shared by my family members but he was not present with me. Yet I had hopes of that union one-day manifesting. While I waited on that manifestation, I was blessed to be placed in the vicinity of a man who appeared to love his family. My pastor was the man that I longed to be like. His family engagement was as the dads from the movies and hit sitcoms, Family Matters and The Cosby Show, from the late 1900's. He spent time with his sons, and I observed that, longed for that.

As a father to a Black male child, much of who I am and what I do is focused on my son's nurturance, protection, and growth. This role of father has impacted and restructured much of my views of Black maleness and socialization into a society that does not eagerly welcome Black men with open arms.

For over a decade I have mentored young men of varying ethnicities and economic statuses. Many of the Black males I worked with rarely cited support from their fathers. Instead, they often expressed feelings of being consistently watched by society with an expectation of failure. After some reflection, I realized that I shared some of their views. I did not lean on my father for support because I had grown accustomed to "figuring it out." I was a first-generation college student without true direction for my future but discovered I was a relatively decent math student and began to gravitate towards all things mathematics. Years passed and I became a first-generation college graduate.

My first professional job after earning my master's degree was Instructor of Mathematics at my undergraduate institution. Many of my former professors and advisors had become my colleagues. One of which expressed, "I never thought you would be anything." Though he shared no mal-intent in his statement, I still asked myself "what was it about me that gave him the impression that I would never be anything?" Those words from my former professor and advisor caused me to revisit my undergraduate transcripts. Viewing my past transcripts, I found that I took numerous courses that were unnecessary for my major. A prime example is I was enrolled simultaneously in pre-calculus and elementary statistics. Elementary statistics is not a course in the mathematics pathway, nor should any student take those courses simultaneously. The poor advisement, even lack thereof, showed that I was another check-off on the to-do list and not a person of interest.

My experiences in higher education as a student, faculty, and staff member have opened my eyes to the advantages and disadvantages of different classes of students and helped me to better assist my students in navigating their educational journeys. More particularly, I empathize with African American males who are on these journeys without a clear vision or purpose for their futures and little to no support from their fathers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as an African American father, faculty, and staff member, my goal is to make meaningful contributions to the understanding of Black male collegiate socialization. My hope is that my contribution to the ongoing dialogue gives further insight on the complexities of the experiences of Black males in college. Future chapters will reveal findings gathered from research participants' stories and the narrative questions that were deployed to answer the research question.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative study was to explore the impact African American male college students perceived paternal warmth had on their collegiate socialization and any anti-Blackness they may have experienced. This study was guided by the following research question: *How do AA men describe the role of social skills acquired through paternal relationships in navigating and responding to experiences of anti-Blackness during their collegiate socialization?* Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven men who self-identified as African American and indicated they had a positive relationship with their fathers while in college. Each participant had differing majors and educational attainments, and their demographic information is provided in Table 1. To maintain their anonymity, pseudonyms were chosen from the names of African American male firsts in their respective fields.

Table 1*Participant's Demographic Information*

Participant's Name	Major	Classification	Degree
Granville	Mechanical Engineering	Sophomore	In Progress
Solomon	Biology	Senior	In Progress
Francis	Psychology	Graduate	Bachelor
Archie	Civil Engineering	Graduate	Bachelor
Jackie	Sports Policy	Graduate	Master
Elijah	Cyber Security	Graduate	Master
Edward	Higher Education Administration	Graduate	Doctorate

Participant Demographics

Granville is a college sophomore from Georgia who loves baseball and desires to be a mechanical engineer. He comes from a two-parent household and is living the life that his father dreamed he could have had, as he stated, “He wants me to somewhat live the life he couldn't.” Granville describes his father’s influence to go to college in the following manner: “he influenced me by keeping me on the right track, keeping my mind where it's supposed to be during high school, so I can have the grades and the academics to go to college and be successful.”

Solomon is a college senior majoring in biology with plans to become a psychiatrist. He was born and raised in a rural country town and comes from a two-parent household. He wants to be a psychiatrist because from his studies, he has found that the “mental health of Black men is really bad”, and he stated,

Since you don't really see Black psychiatrists in rural areas, Black men may be less reluctant to confide in him because he is both Black and a man and will have the qualifications to speak on the topics of mental health.

His father’s influence on his college pursuits stems from his father’s goal for him which is "to be better than him in life. He figured that me going to school would help that goal of his.”

Francis grew up in one of the major cities in Georgia and lived part-time with his father and part-time with his mother. He majored in psychology and earned his bachelor’s degree. He rated his father’s influence to go to college as a four on a scale from one to ten stating, “my father never really forced me to do much. He has always planted seeds and gave enough information or outlets for me to be able to sort information for myself. But anytime I needed something, he was just a phone call away.”

Archie grew up in the urban areas of Mississippi and was raised in a two-parent household, but during his senior year of high school his parents divorced, his grandfather transitioned into the afterlife and these transitions put his college pursuits on an immediate halt, yet “it was always kind of a foregoing thought that we (he and his siblings) were gonna go to college.” More specifically for Archie, he appreciated his father’s stature in the community, the fact that he had a well-paying job, and his influence was always something that Archie wanted to imitate. Archie earned his Bachelor of Science in engineering degree.

Jackie was raised in a two-parent household in the rural parts of Georgia and the family recognized his father as the “bank account.” Going to college for Jackie was an expectation, it was never a question. Now where he would attend college was a completely different conversation. That conversation was a turning point for Jackie as it was the first time he had told his father, “No.” Jackie has since earned both bachelor and master degrees and continues to consult his father’s wisdom.

Elijah is from a rural country town in Georgia and was raised in a single parent household. Though his father’s residence was six hours away, Elijah felt that his father still made a positive impact on his life and how he navigates in society. Their bond was forged through a common appreciation for sports, and sports continue to be a central glue for them. Elijah stated, “Primarily, we’ll talk just how has your week been? How’s school going? And then how’s work going? And then we’ll start talking about sports.” Conversations around sports helped Elijah in many of his collegiate interactions. He has since earned both bachelor and master degrees.

Edward was raised in a two-parent household. His parents were in lock step to where they had him believe that they believed anything that he desired to do in life, he would be able to accomplish that. There was never a question of whether he would attend college. He knew early

on that he would attend college, as he stated: “I wanted to be an anesthesiologist in elementary school because I had a surgery, and I thought that person's job was cool. So, I always knew that college had to happen.” Edward did not continue his elementary dreams of becoming an anesthesiologist, but he has earned a terminal degree.

Dad: I Hear You, Need You, and Thank You for Pushing Me

Each interview of this study was rich and encouraging. Hearing the passion in participants’ voices and seeing the expressions of gratitude on the faces of these men as they reflected on their relationships with their fathers was priceless. Though all did not grow up with their fathers 100% in the home, four prevailing themes evolved out of this study: (a) You Have to Want It More, (b) When They Don’t Care, (c) Building Relationships, and (d) A Father’s Support and the Security it Gives. “Dad: I Hear You, Need You, and Thank You for Pushing Me” was chosen as this section’s title because these themes highlight the importance of the father’s voice in the lives of Black men. It showcases the importance of the father’s presence emotionally and physically in the lives of Black men. Finally, the title recognizes the gratefulness that exudes from the young men because they had fathers to encourage them to persevere through adversity and support them holistically – physically, emotionally, spiritually, and financially.

These findings align with the theoretical framework, Dumas and ross’ (2016) BlackCrit and Weidman’s (2014) collegiate socialization model, because they provide counter-narratives that show how the fathers’ familial influences impact their lives before, during, and after college, thus assisting in their socialization throughout their educational career and beyond. This study shows that Black sons perceived their fathers’ impact on their lives to be most fruitful

and consistently propelled them toward the success they desired. As Solomon, the college senior, stated in his interview:

The hardest step is the first step, really. It is getting the man back in the house. A lot of problems would be solved, discipline problems with kids. It starts with that low-key.

Because Mom was only meant to play Mom. She can't play Mom and Dad.

Solomon's words reveal how the father's role in family functioning is viewed as indispensable – a responsibility that was never designed for a single parent alone. The presence of a strong, supportive father is recognized as a vital source of personal growth and stability. The participants consistently saw their fathers as pivotal in their personal development and in shaping their responses to adversity, highlighting the distinct and irreplaceable impact of paternal warmth and guidance in navigating the complexities of life.

“You Have to Want It More”

One of the core tenets of success fostered by their fathers' guidance and revealed by the Black men in this study is resilience. As they reflected, many of them shared how they could hear their father's voice speaking to them from days past as frequent reminders that pushed them toward the success that they desired. Archie shared his father's words: “You prove them wrong. You show them that not only do you deserve to be there, but I'm better than you. People who have chauvinistic attitudes, you outwork them.” He applied this wisdom by leveraging teamwork and surrounding himself with talented individuals to ensure his success. “I'd always beat them because they didn't understand the power of a pack,” he explained, noting how he strategically surrounded himself with people whose strengths were his weaknesses, so that he ensured he outworked those with chauvinistic attitudes. Jackie shared a similar insight from the words of his father,

You have to always want it more than the next person. You got to work two times as hard as your white counterpart to get on an equal playing level and then work two times as hard as they do to be better than them.

And allowed them to serve as a constant motivator throughout his life. Acknowledging that he might not have been the most athletically talented, intellectually gifted, or even the most good looking, but his work ethic would never be in question, his ability to persevere was amongst his greatest assets.

Granville said that his father shared a similar message with him when he sought to join the baseball team at a predominantly white institution, anticipating any challenges he may face because of racial differences.

My dad said, “if you don't get the spot you want or you don't get where you want at the time, due to your race, know you're no less than them. Everybody's equal, and it's just life, and you must deal with it, but don't get discouraged. Just work harder, because they can't ignore you if you work hard at improving yourself.”

His father's guidance prepared him for immediate trials he could face in sports and equipped him with a mindset to persevere in the face of adversity on the baseball field and various settings in college and life.

Regardless of the occasion, each of them internalized their fathers' lessons of hard work, perseverance, and the necessity of “wanting it more.” Though different in their individual pursuits, they all embodied the tenacity to outwork their peers, and often their White counterparts, as the way to level the playing field. Their father's words were much more than advice, they were intrinsic motivators that gave them the push they needed to forge through tough times and reminded them of their worth. Their words fostered a mindset that success is

earned through effort and the unwavering belief that they must always strive to be better. The determination to “want it more” became the metaphorical compass that guided and guides them on their roads to success and their lives’ journey.

When They Don’t Care

African American male students frequently expressed frustration with the perceived lack of care and support from their professors, often feeling undervalued or disregarded in comparison to other students. These observations shaped their approaches to navigating academic challenges, particularly when it came to advocating for themselves in the face of power imbalances. Francis described his frustration with a professor who seemed uninterested in her students' personal struggles. He spoke very candidly about an interaction where he felt the professor could care less about his livelihood and his efforts to balance work and academics. He recalled the moment of frustration stating, “Some professors act as if they were just so high and mighty, and so important. As if they are the only person who had a lot going on.” He began providing an itemized list of professor statements that frustrated him in the classroom. But the thing that frustrated him most was the new requirements that demanded his physical presence, yet it was not written as a mandatory class day when he signed up for the course. He recalled pleading with the instructor because that requirement directly conflicted with work, which was an hour and a half away dependent on the traffic. As he recalled her words, “I don’t care,” he surmised his pleas were not heard. He internalized the professor’s response and the only thing he could think was "wow!" Francis’s frustration with his professor’s lack of concern or care for the struggles of his life, reflects power imbalances for which many Black male students toil.

Like Francis, Solomon also struggled with feeling undervalued or not valued at all, but his experience in office hours revealed a different side of the imbalance of power. Solomon

recalled the thoughts that were running through his mind as he pondered the interaction he had with his professor.

I was struggling in the class, and it's like if I went to office hours, it's like, I'm a burden to them. And it's like, If I'm there, I feel like I'm wasting your time because you really don't want to help me for real. I'm here to get help, but you don't want to help me, but you're my professor.

As if feeling like a burden was not enough, on one of the following class days, he overheard a conversation between a group of Caucasian girls. They were singing the professor's praises. Solomon just sat and listened to their words. "Oh, I go to his office all the time; he is always willing to help," he recalled. Completely devastated and now feeling devalued, he thought to himself, "Wow! So, the whole time I'm a burden, but he's willing to help you out." Solomon's feeling of being undervalued or a burden, as he puts it, reveals the emotional strains students experience when they believe their professors just do not care and are not a source of support. The frustrations of the research participants led them to pursue different approaches on how to navigate these experiences, but both relied on skills, wisdom, and guidance they acquired from their fathers, which will be revealed in the subtheme below on responding to uncaring professors.

Responding to Uncaring Professors

Even in these situations, the participants' resilience, shaped largely by their fathers' guidance, was evident. Both Francis and Solomon faced moments where they felt unsupported and valueless by their professors, but instead of succumbing to the frustrations in the moment and acting aggressive or belligerent, as the stereotypical Black male, they relied on the wisdom instilled in them by their fathers to offset and navigate the power struggles they faced with

professors. Their fathers' guidance provided them with a foundation of resilience and taught them constructive ways to assert themselves.

For Solomon, his father's counsel became a lifeline as he wrestled with the lack of support from his professor. Frustrated by the notion that he was not worth the support the professor gave others, Solomon vowed to never go back to that professor for any form of assistance or support. Yet the frustration lingered and began to negatively impact his academic performance. Solomon went to his "rock", his father, for counsel and vented his frustrations. He recalled their conversation.

I went to the office hours, and he ain't really trying to help me for real. My dad was like, have you tried any other sources? And I said no, not really because he's the professor. He was like, have you tried tutoring? I'm like, no. He was like the tutors are there for a reason. If tutoring ain't available, sometimes you just got to buckle down and do it yourself. At the end of the day, you are a man. You gotta do it. Sometimes you just do it yourself.

As he pondered his father's words, he concluded that "sometimes the best advice is something that you do not desire to hear." His father's words gave him a shift in perspective; they encouraged him to find alternative methods to succeed.

So, I did what I felt was best. I'd go to tutoring. I'd do anything except go to this professor. I'd go to tutoring online. I'd look at modules and stuff to help me out. Basically, finding my own resources to make it by since the professor didn't want to help me. This process showed me that not everybody's there to help, and so it taught me how to navigate or study for a class. So, if I go to a professor and I feel like I'm a burden... I'm gonna do it myself.

Heeding his father's advice, Solomon reclaimed his sense of control in a space where he felt undervalued. His father's wisdom gave both emotional support and practical strategies to navigate academic power structures, not just for one class, but each challenge he would face. It was a lesson in self-reliance and resilience.

Similarly, Francis found himself in a situation where he had to advocate for himself, but he took a more direct approach. Sometimes avoiding the professor is not the option and students may see an opportunity to advocate for themselves and for others. This is the approach that Francis chose. Balancing his academic responsibilities and workload was starting to conflict, and his grade would spiral if some changes were not made. Gratefully, his job allowed him to adjust his work schedule, which allowed him to maintain his employment and be active in the course. Though he was utterly frustrated, he knew the type of advice he would receive if he called his father about the situation. His father's words, "life is going to keep going, so don't you stress away the day," which he would usually follow with some form of comedic relief, resided in his mind and lightened his mood in this stressful time. In this experience, he expressed, "I did play a little mind game. Because she was telling me if I didn't make one of the practices, then I would pretty much get an F in the class." He conjured a plan to "not stress the day away."

During the next required practice, which was not on the class schedule, he fabricated what truly took place with his schedule adjustment. When he walked into the room, it was as if she anticipated his presence, but his response, she did not. When she snidely inquired about his workload adjustments, he replied, "They fired me because I had to be here!" Francis vividly remembers the professor's shocked reaction, her hands flying to her face as she gasped. Dramatically imitating her, he recounts her panicked response: "Oh no! No, you need to get your job back!" Internally, he laughed and couldn't help but think "if you cared for real, we wouldn't

even be in this situation anyway.” Instead of responding with negativity or abruptness driven by emotions, he used that situation to shift the power dynamic and engage in respectful dialogue. “A situation like this opened up an opportunity for me to be able to talk to the professor in a sensible way, because I wasn’t the only person who felt the way I was feeling,” he shared as he reflected on that experience.

In both cases, the participants applied the wisdom they gained from their fathers to navigate seemingly uncaring professors who were abusing their power. For Solomon, his father’s advice taught him the importance of self-reliance when institutional support fails. For Francis, his father’s words and comedic personality gave him the confidence to confront his professor in a way that encouraged dialogue rather than develop a strained and stressful relationship that would produce more conflict. These experiences reflect a larger truth about how paternal influence shapes the way young men approach challenges in academic settings. Their fathers’ guidance gave them practical strategies for self-advocacy. In navigating these power imbalances, Solomon and Francis found ways to reclaim their agency, demonstrating, that resilience, self-reliance, and the wisdom of their fathers were instrumental in how they saw themselves. The experiences expressed by the research participants underscore the role of paternal influence in shaping how they approached the challenges faced in their academic settings, more specifically, when advocating for themselves in intimidating situations where there is a clear imbalance and abuse of power.

Building Relationships

College students often experience challenges with developing and building relationships. Many of them talk about finding their tribe, those lifelong friends acquired in college (Greenberg, 2018). As the study participants reflected on various ways they developed different

working relationships in college, they realized they had deployed many of the skills they gained from their fathers to establish these relationships. Archie shared a practical strategy that he adopted from his father. He recalled, “My dad used to say that one of the easiest ways that you can gain loyalty is by giving gifts.” Utilizing this wisdom, he landed his first internship at a career fair, where he brought and gifted donuts, pens, and his resume in a custom-made portfolio binder. His gestures showed that he was prepared, and he quickly found that gift-giving became a useful tool for new connections.

While Archie gave tangible gifts to establish or build relationships, others, like Elijah, found that acts of service were his key to connecting with peers. He described himself as “super easy going,” and reflected on how his father’s non-confrontational demeanor assisted in shaping his life.

I can get along with folks, and I’m not very confrontational. And I think I was able to fit in because I never wanted to be in charge. I was like, hey, I’m here to help. Just use me as you need me.

He positioned himself as a team player, and by doing so, he integrated into different student organizations and peer groups. Likewise, Solomon expressed how he utilized his ability to read the room, a skill he credited to his father, to build rapport with his classmates. After he identified someone who he perceived to be struggling with course material, he initiated a casual conversation, stating: “So, what’d you think about class today? And then they’ll be like, I don’t know how to do this. I’ll be like, okay I got a good grasp on it, so if you ever need help, I got you.” Solomon’s method of offering academic support allowed him to establish a good rapport with his peers and forge meaningful relationships through his willingness to assist them through their struggles.

As Jackie reflected, his adoration for his father tugged at his inner child, and he recalled how he desired many of his father's attributes, more specifically, Jackie adored the way his father could engage anyone. He recalled watching him move throughout their community and talk to any and every single person, and then he expressed, "the biggest thing I love about him is building relationships, because he is a man that knows everybody from different ethnicities and nationalities in and around our city. He knows everybody and everybody knows who he is." The model his father provided him with laid the foundation for how he would approach different individuals and build his collegiate network. "So, in college I mainly got on the scene, and I immediately went and found the people I needed to connect with, and I made sure that they knew who and how I was," he said as he thought about his college experiences, engaging with his professors, joining different student organizations, and his fraternity.

Beyond gift giving and engagement, style of dress appeared as an important component of relationship building. Edward reflected on how his father's roles of realtor and minister impacted the way he dressed during college. "I basically looked like my dad when I was an undergrad in the way my dad dressed," Edward shared as he described his daily attire, a button-up shirt, slacks, and a belt. This was his style of dress because he wanted to operate in a leadership capacity in college and noticed that when he observed those in leadership, their attire strongly resembled his father's. Additionally, he noted that this style of dress helped him navigate college, especially in predominantly white spaces as he believed it "was not as threatening, but came off as more polished, more well-rounded, and more educated," suggesting that his style of dress helped him build relationships in such environments.

In their reflections, the research participants found that building relationships in college called for them to utilize the personal values and skills they had obtained or observed from their

fathers. Whether through giving gifts, acts of service, or presenting oneself in a polished fashion, each participant learned how to create meaningful connections that supported their growth.

A Father's Support and the Security It Gives

As the study participants reflected over their lives, one could see the gratitude expressed in their faces knowing that they had the support of their fathers. This theme revealed what the father would do to ensure his son's success and the core tenets that were instilled in them for their self-development. These core tenets were often used to help them with interactions with their peers and how they engage the work. Branching out of this theme will be sub-themes that explicitly detail the accounts. The participants in this study developed an unwavering belief that their fathers would always be there to support them despite the circumstance.

Edward shared how no new venture was off limits as he was growing up. With each new challenge, his parents made it happen, and his father never expressed any doubt that he could and would succeed. He expressed how his father would not allow him to sulk should the expected outcome not be obtained. He said my dad would say, "So, what's next?" Often evaluating what could have been done differently and how they could move forward to ensure success, but sulking was not an option. He recalled a moment in his freshman year when life's challenges grew extremely weighty, his brother had passed and in the thick of things, he found that he could not focus on his academics, which resulted in his grades plummeting and he feared he would lose his HOPE scholarship. Yet, that fear did not linger after the conversation with father removed any kind of financial worry, as he said his father jokingly but seriously expressed "whatever they had to do as a family, inclusive of putting the house up," to ensure his success they would do it, because they believed in him and because he was the first person in their family to go off to college.

I imagine that all parents say this. But for mine, I believe that they believed it! And it was “Edward, you can do anything you want to.” That was something that I took and ran with it. I don't know of a situation where I needed something, and they said no. They always said this is what we can do, and we'll get to where we need to get. Which is why I believed when my dad said if the scholarship is gone, it's all right.

This further strengthened Edward's belief in the idea that his father valued his voice, decisions, and wanted him to be successful. His father's confidence in him was consistently revealed. Knowing he had his father's support, Edward was provided with freedom to explore and take risks.

Jackie shared a similar story of his father's diligence, strong work ethic, and sacrifices he endured to ensure the success of his children. Jackie's norm for Black men and Black fatherhood was one of resilience, which was he observed of his father and took with him on his college journey. As he reflected on his childhood and college years, he highlighted the sacrifices that his father made for his family.

Dad, he's always worked 16 hours a day, 7 days a week, even during Christmas, whenever other people take off. So, those special holidays, special days, he wasn't always there but at the same time, I got a car when I was in 9th grade. He purchased all of us houses, you know what I'm saying, before he moved us to college kind of thing. So, we were always looking at him, in essence, saying hey, he's a bank account, and not looking at him as a father and a friend.

His father's dedication and relentless work ethic showcased to Jackie that success often required sacrifice. Jackie went on to explain how he did not understand the sacrifices his father made until he got to college and began to personally “understand the struggle” of and witness how society

truly viewed Black men. That is when his relationship dynamic with his father shifted from him being viewed predominantly as financial support and more towards a confidant. In the conclusion of his reflections, he solidified it with two words that heightened his sense of gratitude, "I'm Blessed!"

Granville is a college freshman, and he focused on the real-time, hands-on support that his father was actively giving him as he had just had surgery, which restricted his mobility. He recalled the moment:

Yeah, my dad, he helps me with classes when I need help. He helped me get situated in college, moving in and moving out. If I need something in college, he helps me with that, and then I just previously had surgery. And that's holding me back from going to college campus, but he's with me every step of the way. He comes with me for physical therapy.

He helps me get around my city. He just helps me with everything.

For Granville, his father provides more than practical support for his academic and personal life, but also, the fact that he is a constant presence during recovery reinforced his fatherly role as a source of strength and stability for Granville. His father's involvement in his academic journey and physical recovery after surgery highlights a deep commitment to being present for his son in every aspect of life. Here Granville's father is seen not just as a provider, but also a caregiver. His father's active presence and engagement reassures him that come what may, he will be okay.

Solomon described his father as a consistent guide. He reflected on how his father was always there to offer advice and support in various areas of his life.

My dad is like a guide in many problems I have, that don't pertain to the school itself, more like work balance and personal problems I have. When it comes to school, working

and all that in life, he's the person that I feel comfortable going to and talking about my problems. He's always there and he always gives me advice. Kind of like a rock.

The emotional security that Solomon received from his father emerged as a foundation of trust and security that guides him in navigating his life's challenges. He looks to his father as his counselor, his "rock," and has an expectation that he will receive exactly what he needs, when he needs it. "He's Supportive. He's always there to give advice. And honestly, I don't know what I would do if he wasn't there," he stated as he concluded his reflection.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact African American male college students perceived paternal warmth had on their collegiate socialization and any anti-Blackness they may have experienced. The narratives provided by the research participants revealed that paternal relationships were crucial in shaping their resilience, self-development, self-advocacy, and skills to navigate academic and social challenges in college. The four themes that emerged from the data answered the research question and revealed how Black male scholars perceived the impact of their paternal relationships as they navigated the collegiate arena. The themes that emerged highlight challenges that the participants faced and how they were prepared for or were able to navigate each adverse experience because of the wisdom, skills, and support of their fathers. This chapter highlights how positive paternal relationships helped these men shine in dark times and persevere in hard times. The skills and wisdom they acquired from their fathers was revealed to be the navigator for their collegiate socialization.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact African American male college students perceived paternal warmth had on their collegiate socialization and any anti-Blackness they may have experienced. The following research question was used to assist me in gaining insight from the research participants: How do AA men describe the role of social skills acquired through paternal relationships in navigating and responding to experiences of anti-Blackness during their collegiate socialization? Dumas and Ross' (2016) BlackCrit and Weidman's (2014) collegiate socialization model were chosen as theoretical frameworks to understand how paternal relationships influence the collegiate socialization for Black male collegians. The combining of these frameworks amplifies how paternal warmth empowers Black men to challenge and redefine dominant narratives surrounding Black male success as they navigate the collegiate socialization process.

Answering the Research Question

Guided by the combined theoretical frameworks, Dumas and Ross' (2016) BlackCrit and Weidman's (2014) collegiate socialization model, this study revealed that the participants described their fathers as key figures in shaping their ability to navigate the challenges of college life, including those with anti-Black experiences. Resilience, self-advocacy, emotional regulation, and relationship building are the social skills they learned from their fathers that were crucial in helping them respond to the challenges they faced as Black men in white spaces and develop their social networks. Along with the emotional support that paternal warmth provided, participants were equipped with practical tools to advocate for themselves and others, foster genuine and authentic relationships, and confront racial biases in academic spaces. These

findings reinforce the importance of paternal relationships and the influence they have on shaping and guiding African American men throughout their college tenure.

In the sections that follow, I explore the stories of Black males who are currently enrolled in or have graduated from college. Through the narratives, I show how the experiences of participants in this study aligned with or challenged the literature and scholarship on Black men, particularly in relation to the theoretical frameworks guiding this study. Additionally, I present implications and context of the study, as well as concluding reflections.

Interpretation of Findings

The theoretical frameworks that guided this study are BlackCrit (Dumas & ross, 2016) and Weidman's (2014) collegiate socialization model, which proved to be essential in answering my research question. Both frameworks appeared consistently in the themes that were generated by the narratives of the participants, provided structure, and increased the richness of their reported experiences. Weidman's (2014) undergraduate socialization model focuses on students entering college with specific values and goals, and then influenced by interactions with faculty, peers, and parental support. These social pressures, along with the college environment's perceived relevance to career aspirations, led students to adjust or maintain their initial values and objectives based on their experiences (Weidman et al., 2014). BlackCrit guides the intentionality of this work by narrowing the focus from an analysis of race and racism to one on Blackness and anti-Blackness (Coles & Powell, 2019).

Four themes emerged from the narratives of the Black men in this study and will be discussed in a greater capacity. Those themes are: (a) You Have to Want it More, (b) When They Don't Care, (c) Building Relationships, and (d) A Father's Support and the Security it Gives. These themes highlight how Black college males used paternal relationships to help shape their

collegiate socialization and their ability to respond to and navigate anti-Blackness. The findings suggest that paternal warmth, instruction, and modeling had a significant influence on their social skills and resilience in various college settings.

The Findings and the Frameworks

The theme You Have to Want it More is reflected in BlackCrit (Dumas & ross, 2016) because it shows how African American men internalize the need to overcome racial barriers by working harder than their White counterparts to achieve success. Archie and Jackie shared about having to outperform others so that they could be viewed as equal. The pressures that participants faced such as racial bias and societal expectations, are reflected in Weidman et al.'s (2014) collegiate socialization model as normative influences in the socialization processes, where students' behaviors and values are influenced by familial relationships, societal expectations, and institutional norms. Yet, the notion that Black men must assert a greater effort to be recognized as equals is not unique to these participants or this study, as it routinely appears in the literature.

Many researchers highlight the pressures that Black men face, often feeling the need to exert greater efforts, far superior to others, in academia and numerous professional settings to be recognized as equals to their white counterparts (Dumas & ross, 2016; Harper, 2006; Ford et al., 2003). Being that Black men are often stereotyped as less capable, the pressures to outperform are linked to the historical forms of racial discrimination in academic settings (Smith et al., 2016; Allen, 2020). The findings in this theme revealed how paternal guidance helped participants confront racial barriers by fostering a mindset of perseverance and self-reliance. Additionally, Davis (2012) stated that Black fathers' continuous encouragement to their children to persevere

during challenges in academic settings is a key factor in building their resilience and ultimately their success.

The theme When They Don't Care strongly aligns with Dumas & ross' (2016) principles of BlackCrit that emphasize how Black people experience power imbalances and institutional racism, and it focuses on the encounters that the participants had with professors or authority figures who did not seem to care about the participants or their success. These findings are not new nor unique experiences for Black men, as previous research has documented similar experiences. Harper's (2006, 2009) and Dancy's (2014) research speak of how Black people often feel disregarded or neglected by institutional authorities. Francis and Solomon described experiences where they felt devalued or burdensome because of their race, highlighting that their professors showed no concern for the struggles which they faced and left them feeling unsupported. Yet, the paternal relationship proved to be vital.

The skills or direct instruction gained from the Black fathers, guided their sons in reclaiming their agency and in finding alternative means of success that generated meaningful interactions that allowed them to advocate for themselves and others who may have been experiencing power imbalances with their professor which is a counter-narrative, foundational for BlackCrit (Dumas & ross, 2016). This theme shows how paternal warmth provided the tools needed to navigate environments and people who acted in an anti-Black capacity, aligning with BlackCrit's (Dumas & ross, 2016) focus on counter-narratives that challenge negative stereotypes that are readily perpetuated about Black fathers and Black men. These findings also match and support other studies (Coard et al., 2014; Anderson & Stevenson, 2018) that emphasize the importance of Black fathers' involvement in shaping their sons' ability to, not

only navigate, but confront and combat racialized encounters and social challenges that could otherwise devalue their worth.

The theme, A Father's Support and the Security it Gives, focuses on the emotional and psychological safety provided by paternal warmth. Jackie and Edward were encouraged by their fathers to pursue college and received their fathers' guidance and other tangible resources to ensure they achieved their desired outcomes. These findings align with Weidman's (2014) model, which emphasizes that parental influence is critical to the collegiate socialization process, because parents provide emotional support and supplies to help reduce stress in the lives of their children. Additionally, parental influence continues to play a pivotal role in shaping collegiate experiences due to the financial and emotional support students have throughout their college career (Weidman et al., 2014).

It is important to highlight that the participants verbally recognized their fathers as consistent sources of financial support, which alleviated or completely removed the stress associated with living expenses and college tuition and fees. These findings align with the research of Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2013) that posits that African American fathers' educational backgrounds and expectations play a significant role in their children's academic development. Showcasing that the Black fathers in this study were active and involved in their sons' higher education journeys is of importance because it provides an additional counter-narrative, which is in opposition to the dominant literature on Black fathers. Thus, aligns with BlackCrit's emphasis on dismantling deficit-based framing of Black men by highlighting the positive roles Black fathers play in the lives of children's development (Dumas & ross, 2016). Jackie and Edward's stories illustrate Weidman's concept of family support, highlighting

how parental resources and expectations contributed to their persistence in their educational endeavors (Weidman et al., 2014; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013).

Furthermore, Solomon and Granville often looked to their fathers as counselors and guides, leaning on their wisdom and strength to manage and navigate personal and academic challenges. The support that these men received fostered stability and confidence, empowering them to combat and confront issues of anti-blackness without feeling isolated and alone. This aligns with Weidman's (2014) model of socialization because the parents provide emotional and instrumental (psychological and financial) support that the students needed during critical moments of academic and social integration (Weidman et al., 2014). In particular, the involvement of African American fathers has been shown to foster emotional adaptation, psychological well-being, and academic engagement in their sons (Cooper et al., 2020; Dunbar et. Al, 2015), outcomes that resonate with the experiences of both Solomon and Granville.

The theme Building Relationships highlights how the participants utilized skills obtained from their fathers to develop and establish their networks and improve their social capital, which aligns with Weidman's (2014) concept of interpersonal relationships as a critical component of socialization. The participants revealed how their father's modeling and sage advice played a pivotal role in the relationships they developed in college, which is consistent with Hines & Holcomb-McCoy's (2013) findings that suggest that through active engagement and guidance, Black fathers play significant roles in structuring their sons' academic and social trajectories. Archie and Elijah shared how their fathers' advice on giving and service helped them to build lasting connections in college, which reflects the interpersonal development component of Weidman's (2014) socialization model, where students learn to navigate social environments and establish meaningful relationships through guidance from external influences such as family and

in their cases, their fathers. Edward brought into conversation non-verbal social skills, such as body language and attire and how he believed these things impacted the relationships he desired. He reflected on how his father's attire influenced his own style of dress and presence in predominantly white spaces. This reflection resonates with BlackCrit's emphasis on the unique challenges Black men face when navigating predominantly white spaces because their blackness alone can be perceived as a threat (Dumas & ross, 2016), which ties into BlackCrit's analysis of how often Black males manage their presence in racially charged environments that often overly scrutinize their appearance due to societal stereotypes (Dumas & ross, 2016). Edward's reflection also supports Weidman's model because it demonstrated how his behavior (style of dress attire) was shaped by familial guidance, which helped him navigate his collegiate social environments (Weidman, 1989).

Findings and the Literature

The findings of this study greatly support the asset-based literature reviewed and strongly opposes the deficit-based literature that is overwhelmingly reported on Black men and more specifically, Black fathers. It emphasizes the psychological, emotional, and tangible benefits of paternal warmth which highlights that fathers who are emotionally engaged contribute to their children's emotional well-being (Wilson & Prior, 2011; Bean et al., 2006). The findings also align with Coates and Phares (2014) suggestions that emotionally engaged African American fathers have a positive impact on their sons' emotional development and paternal warmth is linked to better emotional and psychological outcomes (Dunbar et al., 2015). The study extends the literature by illustrating specific ways in which paternal warmth supports African American men in navigating racialized experiences and power imbalances in college life. In doing so, it contributes to an asset-based perspective on African American fatherhood and underscores the

importance of paternal relationships in helping Black men thrive while they are on their collegiate journeys.

Support for the Literature

The findings of this study align with Cooper et al. (2020) and Davis (2012), who noted that paternal involvement and emotional support have been associated with increased academic engagement, academic perseverance, and personal resilience, which reinforce the findings that paternal relationships helped to shape the emotional resilience and perseverance of the Black male scholars of this study. Participants recalled their fathers' encouragement and practical advice as instrumental and necessary tools that helped them navigate and persist through academic and social challenges, which resonates with the research of Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2013), which stressed the value and importance of African American fathers' expectations in their sons' physical, personal, and academic development. It also aligns with Harper's (2009) research that emphasized family and mentors help African American men counter negative stereotypes that hinder their academic progressions.

The participants expressed how their fathers' guidance and presence instilled resilience and a strong sense of self, which helped them overcome both academic obstacles and anti-Black experiences in college. The findings align with the positive, anti-deficit research that highlights the active and involved roles that many African American fathers play in their children's lives (Smith et al., 2005; McAdoo, 1993). Participants expressed how their fathers' advice helped them to be successful in their academic and social environments, aligning with Weidman's (2014) model that social relationships essential to college socialization. The fathers preparing their sons for racial encounters aligns with Anderson and Stevenson's (2019) research that states many parents of color utilize racial socialization or communication about racialized experiences

to help their children prepare for and prevent or offset the consequences of discriminatory racial encounters.

Extending the Literature

This study extends the existing literature by providing additional elements of understanding on the impact that African American fathers have on their sons' lives. It gives a nuanced understanding of how paternal warmth intersects with anti-Black experiences in collegiate settings. It reveals how African American fathers prepare their sons to navigate potential racial interactions and discourses they may experience in higher education. Weidman's (2014) undergraduate socialization model emphasizes the importance of faculty and peer interactions in student success. Findings from this study extend this model by introducing paternal guidance as a viable buffer when institutional support is lacking, withheld, or completely absent. Their fathers' guidance gave them practical strategies for self-advocacy.

The findings show that in cases when faculty members choose not to develop student relationships or offer support, paternal involvement can compensate for negative interactions. In navigating power imbalances or an absence of faculty support, Solomon and Francis found ways to reclaim their agency, demonstrating that resilience, self-reliance, and the wisdom of their fathers were instrumental in how they saw themselves, and showed how paternal warmth served as a buffer against racialized experiences of exclusion and marginalization. Veneziano (2003) argued that paternal warmth is often more significant in predicting youth functioning than maternal warmth, a notion that is supported by this study's findings, where paternal involvement was critical in fostering perseverance, reclaiming their agency, and building self-confidence in the participants as witnessed by Solomon stating that his mother's approach to confronting the teacher who made him feel as a burden and unsupported was for her to send an email to advocate

on his behalf, Solomon's father provided the skills necessary for him to advocate for himself. Furthermore, findings extend the literature by highlighting how fathers helped their sons develop critical social and communications skills. These skills are crucial developmental components that assist in relationship building and navigating power dynamics in college settings.

Contradictions to the Literature

The findings of this study fundamentally challenge deficit-based narratives that readily portray Black fathers as absent and uninvolved in the lives of their children and emotionally detached from their children's mental and physical well-being (Lovelene & Lohmann, 1978). These stereotypes appear in media in hyper fashions, along with the unintelligence of and inherent threat that is perpetuated about Black men (Epstein et al., 2017). However, the participants in this study consistently highlighted the active and positive roles their fathers played in their lives, even when they did not share the same household with their father. They all exemplified intelligence, resilience, and an ability to succeed in environments where they faced racialized barriers which they attributed to the support of their fathers.

Literature has portrayed African American males as passive when it pertains to racial discrimination (Allen 2020), often highlighting the struggles they have with micro-aggressions and racial isolation (Smith et al., 2016; Brooms, 2023); painting Black men as weak and docile, lacking in agency when confronted by systemic racism; but this study contradicts all of the above for both Black fathers and their sons, as it shows that the paternal relationships helped to foster self-advocacy, resilience, and strength of character. The deficit-based narratives that have historically dominated discussions of Black fatherhood is challenged and truly countered by these findings, showcasing the positive imprints that the African American fathers have on the lives of their sons.

Context

Although this study contributed to the understanding of the impact that African American men perceived paternal warmth has on their collegiate socialization, there were some apparent limitations. The time and effort that was dedicated to gain access to the rich narratives from these participants was because the foundations of trust had to be established because the participant was either a former participant of a trusted student organization, the African American Male Initiative (AAMI), or referred to the study by a trusted friend or family member who saw the proposed study on one of the researcher's social media platforms.

Participants for this study were all selected from the southeastern region of the United States, and given America's southern history, findings could be different in other regions of the country. Therefore, transferability of the study in other regions of the country is restrictive. Participants had to engage in retroactive thinking processes to recall their experiences in college and with their father, doing so could leave gaps in actual experiences and participant feel the memory to fit the narrative they desired to deliver. Though I worked through the interviews with fidelity there are also potential biases present in my transcription as the researcher. Participants were selected utilizing my personal social media platforms and the snowball sampling method; therefore, it could be a bias because selecting people from the same geographical region could produce similar outcomes.

Implications

Implications for Research

While there is much data that view African American men from a deficit lens, this study contributes to the growing asset-based research. Understanding the influence that paternal warmth has on the development of social skills and resilience in navigating collegiate

environments is paramount. Future research should expand the geographical regions to include African American men from different areas in the country. This expansion will allow the researcher to diversify the population sample and explore how differing geographical regions may affect the experiences of African American male college students.

Future research could also explore how maternal relationships, external relationships, and mentoring relationships may shape social skills and anti-Black navigation strategies in college. The study relied on participants self-identifying their relationships as positive, which inherently excluded African American men who share the character traits and skills revealed in this study but may not have a positively identified relationship with his father. Future research could explore the impacts of a negative father-son relationship and that impact on college socialization.

Implications for Practice

Offices of Parent and Family Programs in higher education routinely express their commitment to helping parents and families stay connected to and support the growth and success of their students. By creating programs that actively involve fathers as influential partners, colleges can provide insights into the collegiate environment and equip fathers with strategies to support their sons effectively. This approach offers the unique support and security that paternal warmth provides, fostering resilience, emotional regulation, relationship building, and self-advocacy skills for African American males.

To support father-focused engagement, colleges could implement family orientation sessions that include workshops emphasizing self-advocacy and fostering a sense of belonging. Sessions tailored to paternal influence could guide fathers on how to support their sons' emotional and academic growth, providing tools to help students navigate collegiate challenges,

access resources, and build meaningful social and professional networks. Through these workshops, Parent and Family Programs would demonstrate the powerful role of fathers in enhancing students' resilience and academic persistence.

Investing in community partnerships that bring Black male mentors onto campus would allow institutions to expand mentorship programs and increase the representation of positive Black male figures. Offices of Parent and Family Programs could establish funding streams to equip these mentors with resources needed to support students effectively, all while fostering a welcoming environment and strengthening ties with the local community.

African American male mentoring programs can incorporate routine workshops during new student orientation and during critical times in the academic year, such as mid-terms and finals, offering targeted support during periods that often heighten stress for students. These workshops could focus on communication, goal setting, and navigating academic and social pressures.

Resilience, self-advocacy, emotional regulation, and relationship building are the essential social skills that African American fathers have instilled in their sons to help them overcome challenges in collegiate environments and academic settings. By actively engaging fathers, colleges would not only support African American male students but also affirm the broader value of family and community in the college journey.

Implications for Policy

Higher education institutions can use the findings as support for the development of initiatives that promote greater racial equity in classrooms and learning environments. Faculty and staff development programs should focus on culturally responsive practices that address implicit biases to ensure the fair treatment of African American male students by their

professors. Regular assessments of campus climate should be implemented to evaluate how institutions support African American male college students. These assessments should incorporate qualitative methods to capture rich, experiential data, offering a deeper understanding of students' lived realities. Such an approach allows institutions to move beyond quantitative metrics alone, challenging neoliberal views that often reduce student success to numbers and rankings. Instead, this approach places value on the social and emotional dimensions of the educational journey as additional critical components to student development and success.

Institutions should consider policies that value cultural wealth as a legitimate and essential component of student success. This involves recognizing and leveraging the navigational, familial, and social capital that Black male students bring with them to campus and integrating these strengths into support structures and success metrics. As Boss and Bae (in press) found, senior leaders often had a top-down focus on metrics such as attendance metrics and grades, without fully understanding the underlying experiences that shape these outcomes. By shifting to a framework that values cultural wealth, institutions can address the “why” behind these metrics and create an environment that genuinely supports African American male students.

Challenges to Implementation

Given the current political moment in higher education, legitimate implementation concerns arise and could pose substantial obstacles to implementing the recommendations outlined. Colleges may struggle to advocate explicitly for culturally responsive practices, which could limit the scope and effectiveness of programs designed to support African American male students. Fear of losing state funds could be perpetuated because of political pressures. These

barriers may inhibit the ability to establish or sustain culturally attuned programs focused on paternal engagement, faculty and staff implicit bias training, or mentoring for African American male students, and racial equity initiatives are often halted or reframed.

To still do the work and provide African American male students with support fostering the essential skills of resilience, relationship building, emotional regulation, and self-advocacy, it may be useful to explore frameworks that highlight community partnerships, mentoring, and parental engagement as universally valuable practices across demographics. By doing so, universities can work within the constraints of the current political climate while still fostering the essential relationships and support networks that aid African American male students. Moreover, focusing on data-driven and research-supported findings could make it challenging for opposition to dismiss these programs by presenting their benefits as essential to improving retention, engagement, and student success outcomes more broadly.

Conclusion

Paternal warmth in the lives of African American male collegians is shown to provide them social and emotional skills necessary to navigate college and socialize into various collegiate settings even when the participants are faced with anti-Black experiences. Findings from this study greatly highlight the importance of paternal relationships in fostering perseverance, social skills, and resilience –skills that are necessary to thrive in college. These findings reinforce Dumas and ross' (2016) BlackCrit and Weidman's (2014) collegiate socialization model, the framework that guided this study. Additionally, they challenge narratives about African American fatherhood and extend the narratives about the experiences of Black men in college.

The theme, *When They Don't Care*, illustrates how Black fathers equipped their sons with the necessary tools to guide them through anti-Black experiences and imbalances of power. This theme reveals how self-advocacy was strengthened, resilience displayed, and agency reclaimed by participants who readily turned to their fathers for wisdom, motivation, and support. The fathers' presence was illuminated throughout the findings and was crucial as the participants navigated academic and social environments that marginalized their presence and minimized their worth. Contrary to stereotypes from deficit literature that portray Black fathers as absent and disengaged, the participants all exclaimed how their fathers were always present and involved, additionally their relationships grew stronger as they entered college and adulthood. The paternal relationships were instrumental in participants building social capital, managing power dynamics, and navigating racialized environments. Therefore, traditional deficit views of African American fatherhood are challenged, and positive discourses on African American fathers and men are strengthened and enriched.

Dumas and Ross' (2016) *BlackCrit* and Weidman's (2014) collegiate socialization model are both extended by this study because it highlights how paternal influences assist in shaping the participants' ability to navigate challenges, such as power dynamics, often associated with anti-Blackness in college environments. The findings also highlight the importance of familial emotional, financial, and psychological supports that undergird African American males as they navigate complex interactions throughout college. In conclusion, this study challenges deficit-based narratives on Black fathers and Black male collegians and contributes significantly to the understanding of how Black males thrive in environments that are often ostracizing, hostile, or racially charged. It provides researchers and practitioners with valuable insights into how guidance from paternal relationships shape resilience, perseverance, and the social skills of

African American males as they navigate polarizing academic and social collegiate settings or environments.

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Appendix A

NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative study is to explore the impact African American male college students perceive paternal warmth has on their collegiate socialization and any anti-Blackness they may experience. I plan to achieve this purpose using the following guiding research question: *How do AA men describe the role of social skills acquired through paternal relationships in navigating and responding to experiences of anti-Blackness during their collegiate socialization?*

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Questions	Black Critical Theory	Weidman's Collegiate Socialization
1. How do you describe the influence your father had on your decision to go to college?		X
2. How would you describe the relationship you have (had) with your father during college?		X
3. What social skills do you believe you gained from your father?		X
4. Describe a moment when you recognized any of these social skills gained from your father and began incorporating them into your life?		X
5. In college, how do (did) you use those skills to engage or develop relationships with: peers, faculty, staff, or to assimilate into student organizations, campus activities, or housing?		X
6. What questions did your father ask or characteristics did your father look for to determine who he would allow in his circle of influence?		X
7. Share with me a moment in time when you and your father discussed anti-Blackness or when you noticed your father navigating anti-Blackness?	X	X
8. Tell me about a time when you utilized skills gained from your father to navigate or avoid anti-Black interactions in college (e.g. in class with faculty or peers, staff (advisors), coaches, campus police or security, student conduct coordinators, etc.)?	X	X
9. How does (did) having the knowledge and skills gained from your father make	X	X

(made) you feel during the anti-Black experiences?		
10. When you reflect on your college journey, how do you think your father's role modeling guided your approach to advocating for yourself and others through anti-Black experiences?	X	X

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT

**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
CONSENT LETTER**

**An Exploration of the Perceived Impact of Paternal Warmth on Collegiate Socialization
and Anti-Blackness of African American Men**

Dear Participant,

My name is Antre' M. Drummer and I am a student in the Education Department at the University of Georgia under the supervision of Dr. Ginny Boss. I am inviting you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate, you need to know that your participation makes you eligible to receive a \$25 amazon gift card, which will be sent via email within seven days of completing the interview. It is also important for you to understand the nature of the study, its purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative study is to explore the impact African American (AA) male college students perceive paternal warmth has on their collegiate socialization and any anti-Blackness they may experience. The research aims to explore various aspects of your social interactions, paternal relationships, and overall experiences prior to and during your time in college. This study seeks answers to the following questions: How do AA men describe the role of social skills acquired through paternal relationships in navigating and responding to experiences of anti-Blackness during their collegiate socialization?

Research Criteria

You have been invited to participate in this study because:

You were born a biological male

You are between the ages of 18 and 50

You are enrolled in college and have completed two full-term semesters or have graduated from a 4-year college or university.

You and your father identify as an African American or Black

You believe you have (had) a positive relationship with your father during college years

Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

Participate in a 60 to 90-minute interview which will be conducted via Google Meet. All interviews will be video and audio recorded to insure the most accurate representation of the participant.

You will be asked to share your personal experiences, perspectives, and reflections related to your paternal relationship, college experiences, and anti-Blackness. You may possibly engage in follow-up interviews or clarifications to ensure a comprehensive understanding of your experiences.

Risks and Discomforts

While participating in this study, there may be minimal risks associated with discussing personal experiences, such as the possibility of discomfort or emotional distress. However, I, the

researcher, am committed to creating a supportive and respectful environment during the interview. You can skip any questions or topics you do not wish to discuss.

Benefits

The insight gained from this study may help scholars, practitioners, AA male collegians, and their fathers better understand factors that influence their collegiate socialization. Findings may inform educational practices, policies, and interventions that can enhance the overall well-being and success of African American male students in college.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality is of utmost importance. All information collected during the study will be kept strictly confidential. Personal identifiers will be removed or changed to ensure anonymity. The data will be stored securely and only accessible to the researcher. No information gathered will be distributed for future research.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. If you choose to withdraw, any data collected up to that point will be excluded from the study.

Contact Information

If you are interested in participating or have questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at 478-299-6043 or by email at antre.drummer@uga.edu. If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the IRB at 706-542-3199 or by email at IRB@uga.edu.

Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Antre' M. Drummer
UGA Doctoral Candidate
Email: antre.drummer@uga.edu
Phone: 478-299-6043

Appendix C

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FLYER

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FLYER

Black Son ✓
“Dad, I’m going to College!”
Positive Father-Son Relationship ✓

**Are you enrolled in
or have graduated
college?**

**Do you identify as
African American or
Black?**

**Your relationship with
your father could be the
change we need!**

**Raise your voice!
Share your story!**

**To participate in this
research study, scan the
QR code or email
antre.drummer@uga.edu**

**\$25 Gift Card
Opportunity**





Appendix D

QUALIFYING DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Qualifying Criteria Questionnaire - [Survey Link](#)**Hearing the voices of collegiate African American males**

The purpose of this form is to gather qualifying demographic information for this research study. To be a study participant, you must answer yes to all questions below.

Do you and your father identify as African American?

Yes

No

Were you and your father both born in the United States?

Yes

No

Are you a biological male?

Yes

No

Are you between the ages of 18 - 50?

Yes

No

Are you currently enrolled in and have completed two full-term semesters or have graduated from a 4-year college/university in the Southeastern region of the United States?

Yes

No

Do you believe you have a positive relationship with your father?

Yes

No

If you answered yes to all the above statements, please provide a dependable email address to be contacted to participate in the study and share your story.

Appendix E

SOCIAL MEDIA (POST) MESSAGE

Social Media Message – Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook Post

Hello friends and colleagues! I am in the data gathering process for my doctoral program at the University of Georgia. I am conducting a research study to explore the impact African American male college students perceive paternal warmth has on their collegiate socialization and any anti-Blackness they may experience. I am completing this research as part of my doctoral degree in Doctor of Education in Student Affairs Leadership.

I need the voices of African American sons who believe they have a positive relationship with their fathers and are in college or has graduated a four-year college to achieve this work. If you believe you meet the criteria in the attached flyer and are willing to participate, click the link below or utilize the QR-code in the flyer and let's make an impact together. If you know someone who meets the criteria in the flyer, please share the link.

<https://forms.office.com/r/MiLQ4wGNdx>

Appendix F

PARTICIPANT EMAIL RESPONSE

Participant Email Response

Thank you for taking the time to complete the qualifying criteria survey. I am elated that you have opted to participate in this study. Attached to this email you will find the consent form, which you will keep for your records, and we will revisit it during our interview.

The next phase is to set up a time for us to have our interview. We will need 60 to 90 minutes for this process. I want to be respectful of and as accommodating as possible of your time. Please provide me with a phone number so that we can discuss the sign-up date and time slot that best fits your schedule, and I will contact you within 24 hours via the phone number listed below.

I will send a reminder email the day before our scheduled interview and that email will include the Google Meet link, also.

The Google Meet link for our interview is located here: To join the video meeting, click this link: [Interview Link](#)

Thank you again and I will see you soon.

Antre' Drummer
Phone: 478-299-6043

Appendix G

PARTICIPANT FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

Follow-up Email Response

Hello (research participant),

I am looking forward to our interview session tomorrow. The Google Meet link for our interview is located here: [Interview Link](#) (copy and paste the link in the browser or press control and click the link for access).

Please log on within 5-minutes of our start time.

Thank you again and I will see you soon.

Antre' Drummer

Phone: 478-299-6043

Appendix H

SNOWBALL PARTICIPANT EMAIL

Snowball Participant Email

Hello (Participant name),

My name is Antre' Drummer, and I am conducting a research study to explore the impact African American male college students perceive paternal warmth has on their collegiate socialization and any anti-Blackness they may experience. I am completing this research as part of my doctoral degree in Doctor of Education in Student Affairs Leadership.

I was given your name by (research participant) because he believed that you would be a candidate for this research study. If you are willing to participate in this research, please click the link, <https://forms.office.com/r/MiLQ4wGNdx> to verify that you meet the qualifying criteria.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your response.

Antre' Drummer
478-299-6043