May 2020

Picture This: Examining the Experiences of Black SGA Presidents at HBCUs Using Photo-Elicitation

Travis C. Smith
Clemson University, tcsmith1906@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations

PICTURE THIS: EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK SGA PRESIDENTS
AT HBCUS USING PHOTO-ELICITATION

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership
Higher Education

by
Travis C. Smith
May 2020

Accepted by:
Dr. Natasha Croom, Committee Co-Chair
Dr. Robin Phelps-Ward, Committee Co-Chair
Dr. Carlos Nicolas Gomez
Dr. Michelle Boettcher

ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study examined how peers, administrators, faculty, staff, and meaningful involvement influenced the experiences of Black Student Government (SGA) presidents at Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCU). The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. Eight HBCUs are represented in this study. Photo-elicitation interviews were used to collect date from nine former Black SGA presidents (four women and five men). Hermeneutic thematic analysis (van Manen, 1990) was used to make meaning of the data (interview transcripts, research memos, photographs). The emergent themes were separated into three categories: peer influences (support, developing relationships, conflict), adult influences (lack of support, support), and meaningful involvement (sense of accomplishment, inspiration, building relationships). The implications for practice and future research were discussed for advisors and Black SGA presidents.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my ancestors in the true spirit of "Ubuntu"—I am because we are. Clemson University was founded on the premise of white supremacy with the exploitation of Black and Brown people through slavery and convict leasing. I take this opportunity to dedicate my work to the lost souls of everyone who bled, sweated, and shed tears on this plantation. It is because of your exploited labor that I was able to take up space in the buildings that you constructed. I acknowledge your presence on this campus and acknowledge your struggles and strife as human beings. Also, I dedicate this dissertation to all of the Black and Brown community members and staff employees. You all often go overlooked but there would be no Clemson University without you all. I acknowledge your presence and thank you for the role you play in making Clemson University operate.

Finally, I dedicate this work to the late Kobe "Black Mamba" Bryant (1/26/20). Your inspiration with the Mamba Mentality helped pushed me through this process. You taught me how to embrace the process and to respect the journey. I will always keep those sentiments near and dear to my heart. I will keep the Mamba Mentality alive by fighting the good fight to educate and uplift the Black community through education. To the Black community: *"you asked for my hustle, I gave you my heart,"* Kobe Bryant.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my village in the true spirit of "Ubuntu"—I am because we are.

First, I acknowledge God and my faith in Jesus Christ for giving me the original vision in 2012 to pursue this degree. I reverence Yahweh for being with me throughout this process. I rejoice in knowing there were some days I felt like giving up, but because of your grace space I was able to push through.

To my beautiful, strong, and supportive wife and partner Shenice, you were the main reason why I was able to finish. You pushed me to write, you lifted me when I was down, you counseled me when I was out, you calmed me when I was angry, and you loved me when I was being hard on myself. For that, I am thankful.

To my parents Stacy and Willie Smith, you all set the foundation for who I am today. I watched you work long hours just to make ends meet, go without to ensure my siblings and I had things, and put your lives on hold to ensure we had the opportunity to dream. For that, I am thankful.

To my family, "The Jeffersons," especially my siblings Antoine, Brandon, and Tytianna, thank you all for always celebrating with me. Your celebrations refueled my tank to fight again. You all never lost sight of the family touch even though I was hours away. This degree is dedicated to Mary Brooks who was not afforded the opportunity to finish high school because she could not afford the tuition. Your weekly talks and inspiration empowered me. For you all, I am thankful.

To the "Power Circle," Maya, Taylor, Roy, & Elena, thank you all for pushing me, inspiring me, challenging me, and encouraging me through this process. I couldn't ask for a better group of close friends to embark on this journey with. For you all, I am thankful.

To "Ole Mother Dear," Alabama State University, I am grateful for the foundation that was created within me as a Black man. You showed me how nine freed slaves could come together to create an institution that would educate many for generations to come. My time with you allowed me to grow, learn, explore, and develop. You helped mold me as the scholar I am today. For that, I am thankful.

To my Unite children, thank you for sticking with me through my absence. You kept me grounded and humble throughout this process. You always reminded me of why I do the work that I do. This is for all of you, the past, present, and future! For you all, I am thankful.

To my "Clemson Shottas," Myrtede, Ashley, Byron, Austin, & BGSA, thank you all for being my Black community in a toxic white space. You all helped me successfully transition to and matriculate through the university. I appreciate all the advice, guidance, and wisdom throughout my time in this program. Most importantly, I am grateful your authenticity and allowing me to be who I am. For you all, I am thankful.

To my committee, thank you for believing in me and working alongside me to complete this journey.

To the city that raised me Lafayette, AL as known as "Da 12". I use this poem written by my best friend Quinterral Ray #BFAM to express my acknowledgements:

> *Growing up in my hood it's all about choices. You live and you learn, but you determine what the choice is.*
> *Early mornings getting up, saying a prayer then hitting the block. Staying out late as possible knowing the street light was my clock. Strangers turn into friends and friends turn into fam, but I wouldn't have it any other way because that made me who I am.*
> *I learned at an early age, if you don't grind you won't shine. Nothing is given so be wise with your time. Lots of parents spoil their kids, but most definitely not mine. If you wanted it you had to work for it that was instilled in my mind.*
> *So, while others took chances with easy money like selling grams, I chose getting a job and that made me who I am.*
> *Sports is huge in my city a great way to make a name, a lot of championships in basketball and football is way more than a game. Baseball is kinda average, even though we start early on the mound. The band is always on point what's a sport without the sound. Friday night lights, Hooray for Bulldogs after every touchdown. It's all part of being from Lafayette, The city that made me who I am.*
> *Sitting on the block you never know what would happen, From fights to shooting, to watching the older cats trapping. But at the end of the day we all love one another, And it's all about respect my mother is like your mother.*
> *Therefore, everybody in the city is like one big happy fam and I'm proud to say I'm from Lafayette the city that made me who I am.*
> *There's a saying "it's not where you're from but where you're going".. and I have to disagree, Because not only am I from Lafayette but Lafayette is inside of me. The wisdom from all the elders can take you a very long way, It's all what you make out of it at the end of the day. It's up to me and the next generation to step up and pave the way, To the great city of Lafayette the city that made me who I AM today.*
> I AM BECAUSE WE ARE!

To Clemson University (The Plantation), I leave you with an excerpt from an original unpublished poem written by Dr. Wilson Okello entitled *Heros ad Heroines*:

Each day this world has tried to kill some piece of me
and failed.
each day doubt has tried to kill some piece of me
and failed
each day shame has tried to kill some piece of me
and failed
each day insecurities have tried to kill some piece of me
and failed
if I am free
it is only because I'm not depending on someone else to save me.

I succeeded in a space that was not designed for me to succeed in. Thank you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2008, I stepped on the campus of Alabama State University as a first-generation college freshman, and it was love at first sight. I was about to embark on a four-year journey into the unknown to discover who I was as a Black man. I must note that it would be virtually impossible to synthesize my entire experience of attending a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in the closed context of this introduction. Thus, I offer an overly brief view of my experience.

Alabama State University was my Black Mecca. I am aware that scholars such as Ta-Nehisi Coats used this analogy to describe his arrival at Howard University (Coates, 2015). My experiences at Alabama State University were centered on Blackness from the fellowshipping on the yard to various displays of cultural pride inside and outside the classrooms. My time at Alabama State University led me to define my HBCU experience as being unapologetically Black.

I am blessed to say Alabama State University afforded me the opportunity to view Blackness from a new perspective. This was the first time in my life I witnessed, on a broad spectrum what it meant to be Black. Being Black was no longer defined by a monolithic category of slavery and civil rights which is drilled into students each February, yearly. Blackness embodied a brand-new meaning of excellence. I was surrounded by future doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs, nurses, researchers, activists, politicians, preachers, and educators who all had one common goal, to become well-rounded leaders and promote community, togetherness, and love.

My pursuit to develop my leadership skills began in August 2008. After quitting the marching band, I began to seek out other opportunities to become active on campus. This venture would lead me to run for dorm president of King Hall. I was up against an incredible sophomore student who appeared to have the election in his pocket. Upon first look, my opponent was undefeatable. He was a smooth brother from Cleveland, Ohio who talked the talk, dressed the part, and knew how to charm the masses politically. Despite being a little intimidated, I was determined to go down swinging. Fast forward two weeks and the elections were finally closed. I would go on to serve as dorm president before being impeached for breaking the co-ed rules of the dormitory. This impeachment would eventually set me up for where I am today.

Weeks passed before I was back on the hunt to fill my time with something meaningful with a leadership role. It was a Monday and the most ironic thing happened. My former opponent from the dorm presidential race saw me in the hallway and asked if I would be interested in joining the student government association (SGA). I accepted his invitation, and this interaction launched my career in SGA. My experiences being involved in SGA would prove to have the most impact on my development as a student. From advocating for students' rights to have coed visitation to navigating the political culture of the university, I learned and developed a wide array of skills and competencies which I still use to this day. My experiences from serving in SGA for four years have shaped this study regarding my research interests and assumptions.

Background of the Study

Similar to my experience with SGA at Alabama State University, current literature supports most of my past assumptions regarding the outcomes associated with participating in SGA. Some scholars reported that SGA provided students with the opportunity to develop certain outcomes such as self-confidence, self-awareness, social competence, application of knowledge, and a sense of purpose (Kuh, 1993; Kuh & Lund, 1994; Laosebikan-Buggs, 2009; May, 2010). Other scholars like Miles (2010) spoke to the leadership outcomes associated with involvement in SGA. She found students who participated in SGA exhibited organizational responsibility and developed leadership skills. These findings also aligned with my personal experience with SGA; it enhanced my leadership skills while strengthening my commitment to amplifying the voice of the student body. This commitment still resonates with me today, but has transformed to include a group beyond college students. Today my commitment is to the Black community.

I also believe SGA impacted my personal life since I became more organized with my time management and prioritizing, developed lifelong relationships with peers, and became fearless in living in the unknown and trying new things. Dirorio (2007) found comparable results in her study. She believed that students who were involved in SGA created lasting relationships with their peers, had a high sense of personal growth and maturity, and became more outgoing.

As a result of searching the current body of literature, I was surprised to see how the current literature supported my initial assumptions about SGA. These assumptions

were based on my lived experiences participating in SGA between the years of 2008-2012. However, I believe there is much more to be unveiled regarding student involvement in SGA. The current body of literature does not examine the lived experiences of SGA president's, particularly at HBCUs. I believe HBCUs provide a unique experience for their constituents, particularly their students. Thus, I hope to use this study to examine an aspect to those experiences.

Significance of the Study

This study is essential to the higher education field for two reasons. First, this study will fill a three-part gap in current scholarly literature. Current literature on student involvement in SGA is limited based on the institutional type and the approach researchers used to examine this phenomenon (Diorio, 2007; May, 2009; Miles, 2010). Most literature is situated at predominately white intuitions; therefore, the current study seeks to fill this void by selecting an HBCU as the institutional type (Kuh & Lund, 1994; Diorio, 2007). Moreover, literature on student involvement in SGA focuses on student outcomes and not the actual lived experiences of the students. I aim to draw attention to the actual experiences that influence students' perceived outcomes. I plan to use that information to present a comprehensive perspective on the experiences associated with participating in SGA. Most current literature only focuses on the positive aspect of student involvement, but all experiences do not foster positive gains. Thus, I hope to illuminate both the positive gains and the hindrances on student development that are associated with participating in SGA.

The second essential reason for this study is to provide student affairs practitioners, faculty, and university administrators with more in-depth information regarding the lived experiences of SGA presidents. SGA advisors, administrators, faculty, and staff have different educational backgrounds, occupations (faculty, staff, or administrators), and approaches to advising that could lead to inconsistencies in advising (Miles, 2011). I have noticed some SGA advisors may not be familiar or comfortable with addressing students' developmental needs. Also, some SGA advisors dedicate most of their attention to SGA governance matters and not developing the student. Thus, I seek to highlight these experiences in order to provide recommendations to SGA advisors, administrators, faculty, and staff. I believe these recommendations will enhance their understanding of students' experiences and allow them to be better equipped with the necessary knowledge to address potential challenges in the development of SGA presidents. In doing so, I hope SGA presidents can avoid hinderances and pitfalls in during their time in office.

Statement of the Problem

Lochmiller and Lester (2017) defined a problem of practice as "topics that the research community seeks to understand and elaborate on through a systematic investigation, which is often referred to as research" (p. 4). The goal of educational research is to identify and understand these problems. The field cannot understand what researchers do not know, and researchers cannot identify what researchers fail to look for, which is the case for the current study.

Researching and understanding the impact of student involvement is not new to the field of education (Astin, 1984, 1996; Flowers, 2004; Moore, Lovell, McGann, & Wyrick, 1998). In fact, we are almost three decades removed from the initial construction of the theory that we know today as the student involvement theory (Astin, 1984). Researchers have discovered vast outcomes associated with student involvement inside and outside of the classroom over the last three decades. Some of these outcomes were increased critical thinking (Twale & Sanders, 199), gains in self-esteem (Inkelas & Weismas, 2003), increased cognitive function (Huang & Chang, 2004), and gains in social competence (Chen, Synder, & Magner, 2010). However, there was one consistent theme across most literature. The participants and settings of the research studies were exclusive in nature. Most literature related to student involvement, and particularly SGA, took place at predominately white institutions, which by demographic makeup, exclude some populations (Cress et al., 2001; Flowers, 2004; Miles, 2010). This exclusion leads the literature to tell an incomplete story of student involvement in SGA.

With this incomplete story of student involvement, there have been some attempts to fill the gaps in the literature relating to racially minoritized populations (Flowers, 2004; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Harper, 2006; Littleton, 2002). This research specifically focused on the outcomes of student involvement for students who identify as Hispanic, Latinx, African American, and Asian American The findings of the research identified outcomes similar to the previous studies such as gains in social development (Flowers, 2004), positive academic gains (Scott, 2017), increased gains in personal development (Sturts & Ross, 2013), and gains in critical thinking and social skills

(Lindsey, 2012). However, the overarching problem of not including all institutional types within research still exists regardless of the positive strides that have been taken by the previous researchers. The current research still fails to fill voids in the literature because it only addresses racially minoritized students at predominantly white institutions.

Thus, there are gaps in the literature because most current research negates the experiences of minoritized students at minority-serving institutions, specifically HBCUs. This study will expand the literature on student involvement at HBCUs. I must note that this study seeks to focus on a specific type of student involvement which is student participation in SGA at HBCUs. My hope is others can use my study as a guide and began to explore the unknown phenomena of student involvement at HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of SGA presidents at HBCUs. This study was guided by the following research questions:

a) How do Black SGA presidents at HBCUs make meaning of their experiences?

b) How do faculty, staff, administrators, peers, and meaningful involvement influence the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs?

I aimed to identify how people influenced the experiences as SGA presidents at HBCUs. These people could be identified as faculty, staff, administrators, board members, alumni, family members, mentors, or others. Given the position and responsibility of SGA presidents, these leaders interact and engage with many people in various roles

throughout their tenure. I examined these interactions and understand how they affected the lives of the Black SGA presidents in this study.

The next type of influence I investigated was peer influence. SGA presidents are elected through campus-wide elections, which means these leaders are selected by their peers. SGA presidents also work closely with their peers through other SGA positions, student organizations, or campus involvement. Hence, I desired to understand what these interactions are like and how these interactions impact the SGA presidents' experiences.

Lastly, I explored the types of involvement that SGA presidents are exposed to. HBCUs have a unique culture that carries many traditions which SGA presidents are engaged in such as presidential inaugurations, summer student leadership trainings, football classics, homecomings, and others notable events. SGA presidents are also active on various committees such as presidential search committees, executive vice president search committees, alumni association committees, and others. I investigated what SGA presidents at HBCUs define as meaningful involvement and how those types of involvement impact their experiences.

To sum it up, there are many facets to the experiences of SGA presidents at HBCUs. I explored three areas of those experiences: adult influences, peer influences, and meaningful involvement. I fill a void in the literature so other researchers can better understand the lived experiences of SGA presidents at HBCUs. Secondly, I make recommendations to SGA advisors, administrators, faculty, and staff who are responsible for assisting in the development of these student leaders. I hope these recommendations will assist the previously mentioned professionals in providing quality advice that can

help SGA leaders better navigate their experiences as student leaders. I also intend for these results to be used to impact best practices in advising SGA presidents.

Research Design Summary

As mentioned above in the previous section, research allows individuals or groups to better understand problems of practice through systematic investigations (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The systematic approach for this study is grounded in the hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy (van Manen, 1990). I chose this methodology because it allows for rich description and interpretation of lived experiences. van Manen (1990) stated, "[hermeneutic phenomenology] is a descriptive methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear … it is an interpretive methodology because it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena" (p. 180). Hermeneutic phenomenology is best suited for examining the lived experiences of SGA presidents at HBCUs.

Building from hermeneutic phenomenology, it was important to choose a data collection method that aligned with the methodological approach. I chose to employ photo-elicitation interviews to collect data. Photo elicitation will enhance the ways that participants describe their lived experiences (Boucher, 2018). Moreover, hermeneutic thematic analysis will allow me to make meaning of the data by recovering and labeling essences of the lived experiences (Patterson & Williams, 2002). All in all, the goals of this study are to utilize hermeneutic phenomenology and photo-elicitation to explore and understand the lived experiences of SGA presidents at HBCUs.

Limitations

This study sought to understand the lived experiences of SGA presidents at HBCUs. This study was limited to the ability of participants to recall their experiences. I attempted to overcome this limitation by inserting photos into the interview. The photos enhanced the participants' ability to recall the essences of their experiences as SGA presidents. Participants were given complete autonomy regarding their responses to the semi-structured interview protocol and photo elicitation prompts. It was the hope of the researcher that participants illuminated as much as possible about their meaningful involvement, adult influences, and peer influences. However, their responses are beyond the researcher's control.

Delimitations

This study investigated the lived experiences of SGA presidents at HBCUs to understand the impact of their meaningful involvement, adult influences, and peer influences. The aim of this study called for purposive selection of the research sites and participants. The research sites were eight schools who have the federal designation of an HBCU. Also, the participants for this study were elected to the office of executive president by their student body and completed one full term as SGA president in accordance with their SGA constitution.

Definition of Terms

The following section will provide clarity regarding the terms used throughout this study.

- *Adult influences* - Adults who provide affirmation, recognition, and attributions of leadership and are viewed as mentors, sponsors, role models; people with

influential power; or a person with positional power (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006)

- *Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCU)* - Institutions that were established prior to 1964 with the principal mission of educating Black Americans and meeting the criteria set forth in the *Higher Education Act of 1965* (Higher Education Act, 1965).

- *Meaningful involvement* - Experiences that clarify personal values and interests, and assist students with learning about themselves and developing new skills (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005)

- *Peer influences* - Peers who provide affirmation, recognition, and attributions of leadership and are viewed as mentors, sponsors, role models; people with influential power; or a person with positional power (Komives et al., 2006)

- *Student government association (SGA)* - The formal student governing organization that provides participatory governance opportunities and is recognized by the institution as the official governing liaison between the student body and the institution (Kezar, 2006)

- *Student government association president (SGA president)* - Student officials who were elected by the general student population to serve in the office of executive president of the institution's student government association.

Chapter Summary

Chapter One provided an overview of this study which aims to examine the lived experiences of SGA presidents at HBCUs. I used the previous sections of this chapter to

explain the problem of practice, the significance of the study, the purpose of the study,

research design, limitations, and delimitations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a synthesis of foundational literature that will serve as a rationale for the current study. I first outline the importance of Black student involvement. Next, I will discuss the outcomes associated with Black student involvement while providing critiques on current literature. I explain why I choose to examine the lived experiences of student government association (SGA) presidents at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). Thirdly, I provide an in-depth review of SGA starting from its origins and ending with outcomes associated with participating in SGA. I then offer a historical analysis of HBCUs while presenting a justification for not excluding these institutions from the body of research relating to Black student involvement. Lastly, I will explain the conceptual framework that guides the current study by providing an overview of student involvement theory, Kuh's (1993) taxonomy of outcomes, and developmental influences. The goals of this study are to explore the lived experiences of SGA presidents at an HBCU and to understand the adult influences, peer influences, and meaning involvements that impact their experiences and development.

Black Student Involvement

For me, student involvement in SGA at an HBCU was more than just being active in extracurricular activities; it was the defining moment in my collegiate career that led to my life's purpose. I was not aware that I enjoyed speaking and sharing knowledge prior to becoming an SGA president. This experience allowed me to evoke change by doing the activities I loved most. I spoke and rallied the students when it was time to make a

stand against my university's administration. I was able to use my platform to share knowledge about the creation of campus policies and university decisions with the student body. I believe everyone should have, at minimum, an understanding to how and why policies are constructed. The ultimate part of my experience that changed my life was the ability to see the immediate change I was making for the student body. This action provided me with a sense of purpose and something to die for.

Being an SGA president helped me identify my purpose on earth which is to help educate and uplift the Black community. I owe it to my peers, the adults who invested in me during that time, and the various events, meetings, and activities that helped sharpen my skills as a student. It was because of these influences that I am the person I am today and why I chose to examine the lived experiences of other SGA presidents at HBCUs to better understand their stories.

Student involvement has been a well-researched phenomenon in higher education for more than a century (Astin, 1975, 1977, 1984, 1996; Flowers, 2004; Moore, Lovell, McGann, & Wyrick, 1998). Not all populations are included in the vast amount of research (Smith, 2018). For example, Alexander Astin's (1975, 1977, 1984) original works did not always include diverse institutional types (minority-serving institutions) nor did he consider various factors impacting the lack of involvement of minority students (Hispanic, Latinx, African American, and Asian American). This lack led additional scholars to begin addressing the deficiencies of Astin's work by exploring the impact of student involvement on student development among racially minoritized groups particularly Black students (Flowers, 2004; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Harper,

2006; Littleton, 2002; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001; Taylor & Hamilton, 1995; Watson & Kuh, 1996).

Given these scholars quests to examine student involvement among racially minoritized groups, there remains a lack of literature that addresses racially minoritized student involvement at minority-serving institutions, specifically HBCUs. Smith (2018) called attention to the lack of literature on student involvement at HBCUs. He argued there was a gap in the literature and more research should be conducted at HBCUs to examine the experiences and outcomes associated with Black student involvement. Other researchers such as Johnson and McGowan (2017) have also supported the call for more research on Black student involvement at HBCUs. Their study sought to examine the role HBCUs play in degree attainment of high achieving Black males. They concluded HBCUs supported and cultivated the development of Black males through student-faculty interactions and leadership programs. The authors concluded by challenging other scholars to conduct more research at HBCUs. Johnson and McGowan stated, "using an intersectional perspective, future studies can explore students' experiences by race, gender, and other salient aspects of identity with HBCUs" (p. 38).

Although the literature is lacking in some areas of Black student involvement, there are some things that are present in the current body of literature. For example, we know that Black students in higher education do not share the same college experiences as white students (Balenger & Sedleck, 1993; Jacoby, 1991; Livingston & Stewart, 1987). Littleton (2002) spoke to some of these differences. One of the participants in his study stated, "These existing organizations did not have an accepting environment for

African Americans" (p. 58). Another student referred to the sororities on her campus as "not very accepting of Blacks" (p. 58). Both students attended a predominately white institution and eluded to the need for more Black organizations, specifically fraternities and sororities. Littleton also highlighted the lack of inclusive activities for Black students on several predominately white campuses. The students presented a perception that there was not much offer for them to do and everything was tailored toward the majority white student population.

I believe these experiences differ because of many factors that are byproducts of racism such as limited campus activities for Black students, a lack of Black faculty, a lack of financial resources, and negative racial campus climates which all lead to a sense of isolation for Black students (Jacoby, 1991). Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) discussed the negative relationship between faculty and Black students. They found that faculty had lower expectations of Black students. Lundeberg and Schreiner stated, "African American students were conveyed by such behaviors as ignoring their participation, treating them stereotypically, and expressing impatience with their responses" (p. 562). The students were being treated as less than. Perhaps this was due in part to faculty of other races not considering Black students as able or intelligent, so they allowed stereotypes to cloud their decision making.

Additionally, Sav (2010) brought attention to the lack of funding for HBCUs. The author identified several funding discrepancies that he contributed to fiscal discrimination. He specifically identified HBCUs received less state dollars in his studied compared to public state-funded white institutions. Although Sav (2010) alluded to some

progress is decreasing the funding gap, he challenged how progress should be defined. More details will be mentioned regarding funding disparities for HBCUs in a future section of this chapter.

Lastly, Black students have differing experiences of campus racial climates than students of other ethnic backgrounds. Solórzano, Allen, and Caroll (2002) stated, "where the campus racial climate is negative, Black and Chicano/Latino students in particular have lower access and success" (p. 16). Leath and Chavous (2018) found differences in academic satisfaction and perceptions as a result of campus racial climate among Black women, women of color, and white women. Black women reported higher rates of classroom inferiorization and ethnic threat than the other two groups. In sum, a negative campus racial climate not only differs among groups, but it impacts the motivation and mental stability of Black students.

All in all, the experiences of Black students are not the same as other ethnic groups on college campuses. The examples above have demonstrated some root causes of those differences such as limited campus activities, a lack of Black faculty, a lack of financial resources, and negative racial campus climates. These causes are the results of a systemic structure of oppression and must be named and combatted. However, that cause is beyond the scope of this study. I believe research on student involvement can be used as an avenue to combat some of those challenges, but this will not eradicate the root cause which is racism.

For now, I seek to explore student involvement as a way to ensure Black students are afforded the best experiences possible while enhancing the developmental outcomes

for these students. My goal is to highlight the benefits of student involvement. The next section of this literature review will provide a rationale to the importance of Black student involvement for student persistence, identity development, and educational gains.

Importance of Black Student Involvement

The experiences of students on college campuses are believed to be related to their overall development and success. As a student affairs practitioner, I believe student success varies based on the goals of the institution and the students. I hate to put a box on success, but for the purposes of this section I refer to success in terms of persistence, racial identity development, and educational gains.

Student involvement impacts the success of Black students. Littleton (2001) found faculty influence, campus activities, and student involvement in organizations were factors that influenced Black student persistence. Littleton stated, "…both students and administrators agreed on the importance of involvement; it fostered a connection with the institution and allowed opportunities for the students to be a well-rounded individual" (p. 8). Student involvement increases student retention for Black students which could be the first step in combatting obstacles that Black students face. The second step could be expanding the scope of research beyond predominately white institutions. Littleton (2001) focused on the persistence of Black students towards graduation and outcomes as a result of involvement. This specific focus unintentionally excluded an examination actual Black students' experience that fostered the outcomes. More research should examine the lived experiences of these students to better understand how their

involvement with faculty members, campus activities, and organizations impact their retention.

Similar to student involvement influencing Black student persistence, racial identity development can also attribute to the increased persistence of Black students. As previously mentioned, Black students persisted at higher rates when they were taking advantage of opportunities to become well-rounded students. Identity development cannot be excluded when discussing the holistic development of a student, especially for Black students regarding their radical identity attitudes.

This concept of racial identity attitudes refers to the four stages of Black identity development (pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization) and is often measured by the Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (Helm, 1990). Taylor and Howard-Hamilton (1995) examined the relationship between involvement (on-campus activities, organizations, sports, academic experiences, faculty/staff interaction, employment, and community service) and racial identity development attitudes for Black students. The authors found a significant correlation between student involvement and racial identity attitudes in every subcategory except employment. These findings prove student involvement can impact racial identity attitudes for Black students which also supports the notion that student involvement is vital to the success of Black students' identity development on college campuses.

In addition to racial identity development, student involvement in campus activities is linked to educational gains for Black students (Watson & Kuh, 1996). The authors posited that students who participated in campus activities reported increases in

personal and social competence, intellectual skills, vocational preparation, general education/literature/art skills, and science and technology skills. Hence, student involvement in campus activities enhances personal and academic development for Black students which further supports the idea that student involvement is pivotal to the success of Black students.

In short, student involvement is key to the personal and academic development of Black students on college campuses and fosters a variety of outcomes based on the type of involvement. For example, residential involvement leads to educational gains (Scott, 2017; Hill & Woodward, 2013) and intellectual gains (Inkelas & Weisman, 2003) while recreational involvement can lead to gains in social skills (Sturts & Ross, 2013). The following section will explore how residential involvement, academic involvement, student-faculty interaction, recreational involvement, and campus organizations impact developmental outcomes for Black students.

Outcomes of Black Student Involvement

I believe students should carefully consider the type of involvement they choose to engage in. Involvement on college campus comes in many forms and levels of commitment such as residential involvement, academic involvement, student-faculty interaction, recreational involvement, and campus organizations. Students should intentionally align their desired outcomes with the type of involvement to meet their goals. The following section will examine the outcomes of Black student involvement in residential involvement, academic involvement, student-faculty interaction, recreational involvement, and campus organizations.

Residential Involvement

Residential life on campus is more than just having a place to sleep at night. Campus residential life impacts the holistic development of Black students. Research shows that Black students benefit from living on campus and participating in designed residential communities (Edwards & Mckelfresh, 2002; Flowers, 2004; Hill & Woodward, 2013; Scott, 2017). Flowers (2004) examined how living on campus influenced Black students' educational outcomes. He reported that Black students who lived on campus had higher gains in personal and social development when compared with Black students who did not reside on campus. According to Flowers,

> students who lived on campus were more likely to report higher gains in developing personal values and ethical standards, learning about and understanding oneself and others, learning how to get along with different types of people, learning how to participate in a team, and developing habits that promote good emotional and physical health. (p. 286)

These findings from Flowers (2004) support the beliefs that student involvement in residential communities produce personal, social, and academic gains.

Similar to Flowers (2004), Scott (2017) reported a significant relationship between Black students living on campus and academic performance for student-athletes. The author found that student-athletes who resided on campus reported higher grades than student-athletes who lived off campus. Turley and Wodtke (2010) reported similar findings which showed Black students who resided on campus had significantly higher grade point averages than Black students who lived off campus. Thus, Flowers' (2004),

Scott's (2017), and Turley and Wodtke's (2010) findings reinforce the importance of living on campus for Black students as it impacts their educational and personal outcomes. These studies could be expanded to examine the campus living experiences of these students to better understand which factors influenced the previously mentioned academic gains.

In discussing academic gains, grade point averages are not the only educational outcome that Black students reported as a result of engaging in residential involvement. Living-learning programs within residential facilities have been shown to impact retention and Black student development on college campuses (Hill & Woodward, 2013; Inkelas & Weisman, 2003; Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, & Johnson, 2006). Hill and Woodward (2013) sought to determine the impact of participating in a living-learning community on student retention. The authors found that engaging in a living-learning community improved student retention rates for all ethnic groups in their study. Inkelas and associates (2006) reported that Black students used their residential hall resources at the highest levels when compared to other ethnic groups. Inkelas et al. also found that Black students "expressed the strongest intellectual outcomes that emphasized personal identity and growth in liberal learning" (p. 70).

Similar to the findings of Inkelas et al. (2006), Inkleas and Weisman (2003) investigated the outcomes of participating in three types of living-learning communities. The authors found a positive relationship between Black students who participated in an academic honors community and having a smooth academic first-year transition. The students also reported higher levels of confidence in their first-year transition. These

findings reinforce the belief that Black students who participate in living-learning communities exhibit higher retention rates, gains in intellectual development, and smooth first-year academic transitions.

Again, research demonstrates a need for Black student involvement in residential learning communities. Inkleas et al. (2006), Inkleas and Weisman (2003), and Longerbeam, Owen, and Johnson (2006) focused only on the outcomes of Black students' involvement which leaves room for more research that can examine actual experiences.

Academic Involvement

In addition to residential involvement, academic involvement is another factor that impacts educational outcomes for Black students. Research asserts that academic involvement influences the matriculation and retention of Black students (Gipson & Mitchell, 2017; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002; Zang, Fei, Quddus, & Davis, 2014). One form of academic involvement is advising and mentoring. Zang and associates (2014) investigated the impact of advising at-risk students in an early intervention program. They found that students who actively participated in advising sessions had a higher probability of passing the class than those who did not participate.

Moving outside of academic advising and mentoring, high impact programs are another form of academic involvement. Gipson and Mitchell (2017) described high impact programs as seminars/experiences, internships, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments, diversity/global learning, service learning, community-based learning, and research. They sought to identify the relationship between academic

involvement and academic performance. Gipson and Mitchell reported an increase in students' grade point averages (GPAs) as their participation in academic engagements increased. They also found junior and senior students reported higher GPAs when involved with collaborative assignments, diversity/global learning, and research. These findings illustrate the importance and benefits of participating in high impact programs for Black students. Both Gipson and Mitchell (2017) and Zang and associates (2014) were also focused on impact, which strengthens my argument for more research on the student experiences regarding high impact programs.

In addition to high impact programs, Outcalt and Skewes-Cox (2002) examined how much Black students are involved in academic programs at HBCUs. They reported over 60% of Black students in their study finished their homework on time, challenged professors' ideas, completed work for the course, and engaged in collaborative projects which led to high levels of satisfaction among participants. Outcalt and Skewes-Cox also found students reported a higher sense of satisfaction with their academic experiences when compared to their counterparts.

Adding to the context of academic involvement, Hrabowski and Maton (2009) provided recommendations to enhance academic involvement for Black students. The authors believed universities should encourage the formation of more study groups, strengthening tutorial centers, and requiring faculty to give feedback early in the semester. All of these measures would enhance academic outcomes for Black students.

In brief, academic involvement such as advising, mentoring, and participating in high impact programs positively impacted the retention and student satisfaction of Black

students. These findings demystify the idea that Black students are not motivated or actively engaged in academic offerings on college campus. Researchers must continue to use research to highlight the importance of academic involvement for Black student and further examine how faculty and staff can better assist students in their academic development.

Student-Faculty Interaction

Even though academic involvement accounts for some educational outcomes for Black students, this involvement may or may not include faculty (Chang, 2005; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Strayhorn & Sandler, 2009). I chose to focus on faculty-student interactions in this section in order to keep the literature concise and streamlined.

Student-faculty interactions positively influences college satisfaction and impact the personal and social gains for Black students (Chang, 2005; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Robertson & Mason, 2008; Strayhorn, 2008; Strayhorn & Sandler, 2009). For example, Chang (2005) researched the level of student-faculty interaction at community colleges. Black students reported higher participation with student-faculty interactions in the form of speaking up during class discussions, asking instructors questions during class, conversing with instructors before and after class and utilizing instructors' office hours. Chang (2005) also found Black students who had lower grades engaged the most with their professors seeking extra help and support. These students placed a value on student-faculty interactions in regard to their academic development.

Comparable to Chang (2005), Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) sought to identify the impact of student-faculty interaction on learning. Lundberg and Schreiner reported

"satisfying relationships with faculty members and frequent interactions with faculty members … were strong predictions of [student] learning" (p. 559). Black students reported higher levels of working to meet their professors' expectations and working harder based on faculty feedback than other ethnic groups.

Knowing Black students demonstrate a thirst for active classroom engagements that result in academic gains, research highlights the benefits of student-faculty interaction on personal development (Strayhorn, 2008). He examined "the relationship between engagement in educationally meaningful activities and perceived personal/social learning outcomes" (p. 2). Student-faculty interactions were positively correlated with student's perceived personal/social learning gains. Strayhorn also claimed that Black students reported higher levels of growth in personal/social learning outcomes than their counterparts. Strayhorn stated, "Blacks seem to derive more than whites from their engagement experiences" (p. 11).

Additionally, Strayhorn and Sandler (2009) investigated the influence of student-faculty mentoring on satisfaction with Black students. Their findings support the assertion that student-faculty interactions foster educational outcomes for Black students. The authors reported a significant relationship between student-faculty mentoring and Black student satisfaction with college.

In conclusion, student-faculty interactions benefit Black students in regards to their personal/social gains, work ethic, and college satisfaction. Chang (2005), Lundberg and Schreiner (2004), Strayhorn (2008), and Strayhorn and Sandler (2009) believe student-faculty interactions are a major attribute of Black student success. Therefore,

more research is needed on the lived experiences regarding student-faculty interactions within and outside the classroom.

Recreational Involvement

Similar to the aforementioned residential and academic involvement, recreational involvement fosters gains in student development and is essential to Black students' success in college (Belch, Gebel, & Maas, 2001; Down, 2004; Kanter, 2000; Sturts & Ross, 2013). Social gains are one type of outcome associated with participating in recreational sports. Sturts and Ross (2013) posit that recreational sports improved overall happiness and self-confidence while increasing determination, community involvement, time management, self-worth, and bonds with teammates.

Moreover, Flowers (2004) believed that participating in athletic sports and using recreational facilities led to gains in understanding arts and humanities, personal and social development, and thinking and writing skills. Students did not have to actively participate in recreational sports to experience gains in educational outcomes. Students who were spectators at sporting events also reported increases in understanding arts and humanities, personal and social development, thinking and writing skills, and vocational preparation.

Additionally, Lindsey (2012) investigated the level of satisfaction and benefits of participating in recreational sports facilities and programs at a southeastern HBCU. She found that students were satisfied with their experiences participating in recreational sports. Lindsey also found students reported gains in self-confidence, sense of accomplishment, respect for others, communication skills, sense of belonging, leadership

skills, problem-solving skills, and multitasking. Hence, participating in recreational sports facilities and programs impacted their development as students. These educational gains are also seen as useful tools inside the classroom (Astin, 1984). In sum, athletic involvement is vital to the personal development of Black students on college campuses. This type of involvement supplements learning, personal development, and social development of Black students outside the class. Athletic and academic involvement should be coupled as a holistic approach to Black student development.

Campus Organizations

Outside of residential, academic, and recreational involvement, Black students also benefit from participating in campus organizations which may serve as an outlet for student involvement (Baker, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1996; Patton, Bridges, & Flowers, 2011). Kimbough and Hutcheson (1998) investigated the impact of Black Greek-letter Organizations (BGO) on leadership development. They found students who were members of BGOs were more likely to be active in other campus organizations such as student government, academic clubs, residence hall assistants, Black student groups, and campus ambassadors. Kimbrough and Hutcheson also reported students who participated in BGOs described themselves as leaders at a higher rate than students who were not members of BGOs, which shows that students had higher self-confidence.

In agreement with Kimbough and Hutcheson (1998), Patton and associates (2011) sought to determine if Greek-letter organizations impacted student engagement in educational practices. The authors defined engagement in educational practices as

academic challenge, class participation and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, and supportive campus environment. Patton and associates reported students who were members of Greek-letter organizations were more involved with student-faculty interactions and class participation and collaborative learning. This reinforces the belief that participating in Greek-letter organizations is beneficial for Black students because it serves as a pipeline to involvement in other campus opportunities.

In keeping with the impact of Black student involvement in campus organizations, Black students reported educational gains as a result of participating in student organizations. Baker (2008) researched links between participating in student organizations and academic performance. Baker reported that Black students illustrated academic gains when engaging in political and art-based organizations.

Furthermore, Guiffrida (2003) found student organizations assisted members by connecting with faculty outside the classroom, providing service opportunities to other Black students, and providing a safe space for students (sense of belonging). The organizations provided students with avenues to enhance their development and educational outcomes. Faculty and staff should use student organizations as a bridge to connect with students to enhance their personal and academic development. Also, more research is needed to examine these collaborations with a common goal of understanding the experiences of the Black students, faculty, and staff members who participate in campus organizations. We must gain more in-depth knowledge on the experiences that are producing the desired outcomes so better frameworks and strategies for the collaborative initiatives can be created.

Not only does involvement in campus organizations enhance social integration and relationships, but it also can lead to identity development. Harper and Quaye (2007) sought to identify ways in which student organizations supported the development of Black identity among Black males. Participants reported a "commitment to uplifting the African American community and devoting himself to dispelling stereotypes, breaking down barriers, and opening new doors for African Americans" (Harper & Quaye, 2007, p. 134). Moreover, Museus (2008) examined the role ethnic student organizations play in the experiences of minority students. He reported three themes where ethnic organizations served as "sources for cultural familiarity, vehicles for cultural expression and advocacy, and venues for cultural validation" (p. 576). These findings support the argument that involvement outside the classroom (particularly with student organizations) for Black students lead to significant gains in self-awareness and self-confidence. These personal gains in self-awareness and self-confidence are poignant for Black students who face racism and white supremacy daily. It is difficult for students to be confident when they lack self-esteem and deficiencies are always being reinforced by society. Hence, building self-confidence is a necessary for survival.

As a final point, Black students must be intentional when selecting the type of organization to be involved in because outcomes vary based on organizational type. For example, Sutton and Kimbrough (2001) found the majority of students who were involved in campus organizations viewed themselves as leaders. These findings illustrated an increase in self-confidence and self-awareness. Flowers (2004) reported students' involvement in activities such as going to the library, interacting with faculty,

course learning, personal experiences, student union experiences, athletic experiences, and clubs led to gains in personal and social development, understanding arts and humanities, understanding science and technology, thinking and writing skills, and vocational preparation. Finally, Harper (2006) outlined six practical competencies students reported as a result of being involved in campus organizations: the ability to work with people from different backgrounds, effective time management, teamwork and collaboration skills, communication skills, task delegation and leadership development of others, and political navigation skills. Black students must be intentional when selecting how to be involved on a college campus, because their desired outcomes should be aligned with the type of involvement.

Challenges with Black Student Involvement

Although student involvement leads to personal, social, and academic gains, which are all seen as positive outcomes, there are also negative aspects of student involvement. Some researchers have highlighted negative impacts of Black students being involved on college campuses including students having lower GPAs and negative relationships with faculty members (Baker, 2008; Brittain, Sy, & Stokes, 2009; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Strayhorn & Sandler, 2009). Brittain and associates (2009) investigated the effects of mentoring on academic outcomes. The authors found that students who received mentoring had lower GPAs than students who did not. The authors, however, also discovered that students who received mentoring were more involved in other campus organizations. This led them to believe that the students' level of involvement accounted for the drop in GPAs. Moreover, Baker (2008) also found

31

involvement in Greek lettered organizations negatively impact student's grade point average. This finding was attributed to the Greek life environment that placed a high value on social settings.

Outside of lower GPAs, some students also have difficulty developing relationships. Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) found Black students expressed less than satisfying relationships with their faculty even though they found Black students were more likely to discuss personal concerns with their professors than other ethnic groups. These results reinforce the notion that Black students desire to have student-faculty interactions at high rates, but their experiences and benefits might not be the same as others even if they allow themselves to be vulnerable and open up to their professors. Additionally, Strayhorn and Sandler (2009) reported Black men scored higher than Black women in having both research mentoring relationships and interpersonal/professional mentoring relationships with a faculty member. Therefore, this study highlighted the gap between gender groups. These findings reinforce the difficulties Black women face early on in their undergraduate academic careers which could lead to isolation and disengagement with academics. Hence, more research is needed to examine the holistic experiences of Black student involvement.

To conclude, Black student involvement plays a crucial role in the educational success of Black students. This literature review, however, was constructed based on a limited body of literature on Black students. Hence, more research must be conducted to gain a better understanding of Black student involvement and its impact on developmental outcomes. This research should focus more on ways that involvement

impacts students' developmental outcomes. Furthermore, researchers must expand the types of Black student involvement that is researched such as university choirs, marching bands, modeling companies, and student government associations (SGA). Hence the purpose of the current study is to expand the field of knowledge on Black student involvement in SGA. The next session of this literature review will focus on existing literature on SGAs including an overview of its historical contexts and developmental outcomes associated with Black student participation.

Student Government Associations

Similar to residential involvement, recreational involvement, academic involvement, and student-faculty interaction, participation in student governance enhances the holistic development of students on college campuses. Moore (1995) stated, "Student involvement in the governance process may be the most potent learning experience future community leaders can have" (p. 204). These experiences offer firsthand examples of students dealing with conflict resolution, strategic planning, and community advocacy.

Additionally, Smith, Miller, and Nadler (2016) noted students who participate in university governance get a personal glimpse at campus life and business, academic procedural issues, social issues, and self-governance issues. Students who are afforded the opportunity to sit at the table during meetings are exposed to complex issues and have a broader view on the innerworkings of a university. This opportunity also allows students to have a voice in decision-making. Lizzio and Wilson (2003) found "[students reported] high levels of learning and development" (p. 82) as a result of their experiences

33

with university governance. As a result, students benefit in various ways from being involved in university governance. The aim of this section is not to focus on student governance in its entirety, but to focus on the particular avenue some students use to participate in student governance which is student government associations (SGA). I will focus on students' involvement in SGAs by providing a brief historical perspective on the evolution of SGAs and a synopsis on the outcomes associated with students' involvement in SGAs.

History of SGAs

Freidson and Shuchman (1995) defined student government as, "A type of organization which by virtue of its composition and constitution is entitled to represent the student community as a whole" (p. 6). The exact origin of student government is not known, but student government has been around for more than half a century. May (2010) believed, "Student self-governance [arose] out of a combination of the need for extracurricular outlets, disengagement with the academic curriculum, dissatisfactions with institutional rules and disciplinary procedures, and a desire for student empowerment" (p. 208). As a result of their dissatisfaction, students developed literary societies. These societies "enabled students to become engaged educationally and socially" (p. 209). Literary societies birthed the student government associations known today.

For 100 years, literary societies focused on co-curricular resources and extracurricular activities but focusing on resources and activities alone did not satisfy the urge for autonomy (May, 2010). Students wanted more they so used literary societies to

create honor systems (offspring of literary societies) in the late 1700s. May stated, "students were frustrated with the lack of authority over their lives and actions" (p. 210). Over the next 200 years, students capitalized on the momentum and transformed honor systems into student assemblies, class councils, student councils, and student associations (student government) respectively.

Fast forward to the early 1900s, student assemblies became more extensive and more complex as campuses grew (May, 2010). Students began to assemble to discuss their frustrations and vote on action items. Universities were also beginning to see a more diverse student population. These assemblies influenced institutions to divide students into classes based on their level of academic proficiency. Class councils emerged as a direct result of this division and the growth on college campuses remained exponential (May, 2010; Otten, 1970; Somers, 2003). This growth at college campuses led to the creation of student councils, which oversaw student assemblies and the student body as a whole (Somers, 2003). Universities sought a more representative student governing role for students which led to the creation of student associations. These associations were formed to manage the student body and its affairs while giving students greater exposure to university decision-making, student issues, and curriculum development. This new responsibility would begin to impact the development of students like the academy has not seen before. The following section will outline the impact that SGA has on student development.

Student Government Outcomes

Students acquire many benefits from participating in SGAs. Those gains are by-

products of being exposed to various environments in and throughout college campuses such as board meetings, town halls, and committee meetings (Astin, 1984; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Pascarella, & Terenzini, 1996). These environments impact SGA officers' learning and development in different ways (May, 2010). Hence, Kuh and Lund (1994) sought to "examine the benefits associated with participation in student government" (p. 5). Kuh and Lund discovered that students experienced gains in self-confidence, sense of purpose, vocational competence, and altruism as a result of being involved in student government.

Kuh and Lund (1994) also reported SGA involvement was found to be more meaningful in the areas of social and practical competence. The authors defined social competence as, "working with others, teamwork, dealing with others, public speaking, communication, and patience" (p.15) and defined practical competence as, "decision-making ability, organizational skills, budgeting, and dealing with systems and bureaucracies" (p. 15). Social competence is necessary because students who are involved in SGA continuously interact with their peers, faculty, administration, alumni, and other stakeholders to develop plans and complete tasks. Students must learn how to manage their time, effectively manage the student government budget, and navigate the systems and bureaucracies of the university.

Previous studies pointed out that involvement in SGA increased gains in social benefits, personal benefits, and skill development. Diorio (2007) found a majority of the students who were involved in student government developed friendships, interacted with faculty, and became more outgoing. SGA helped facilitate interactions between students

and faculty through town halls and various committee meetings. Diorio also concluded participants reported growth in goal setting, personal development, and gaining practical skills at high rates as a result from students that were involved in SGA. She reported 68.5% participants achieved their personal goals and 57.2% of participants reported a boost in maturity, while 74.3% of participants improved their listening skills. The findings from Diorio (2007) supported findings of Kuh and Lund (1994) that students who are involved in SGA develop gains in social competence, autonomy, and practical competence.

Developing practical competence can be transferred into career development as a result of participating in SGA (Kuh & Lund, 1994). Laosebikan-Buggs (2009) conducted a case study of SGA executive leaders at an HBCU. This study aimed to investigate the impact of SGA involvement on career choice. Participants attributed career development to their participation in student government. Laosebikan-Buggs stated, "Each participant noted that their student government prepared them more for the workplace by giving them workplace competencies in areas such as budgeting, organizational skills, and interpersonal relationships" (p.127). Laosebikan-Buggs recorded a participant stating,

> Student government is a great boot camp for anyone who wants to get into politics and it gives you those essential skills for any workplace. The number one thing I talk about when I go into interviews is my experience in SGA: how to manage people and being over a team and administering a budget. (p. 127)

These findings support Kuh and Lund's (1994) practical competence, social competence, and application of knowledge.

In the same way, involvement in student government has similar outcomes in different types of institutions across the country. Miles (2010) conducted a study on SGA leaders at a faith-based college, women's college, research institution, and community college. The purpose of this study was to "describe how postsecondary institutions from a variety of typologies develop student leaders" (Miles, 2010, p. 22). The students in this study expressed their experiences in three themes: change, organizational responsibility, and cultivating leadership. Miles stated,

> students all reported excitement at the idea of creating change and bringing new ideas to campus … students took responsibility of leading student government seriously … students described feeling a sense of responsibility for helping others develop their leadership skills. (pp. 24-25)

Miles (2010) findings are supported in the Kuh and Lund (1994) study. Change, organizational responsibility and cultivating leadership can be described using Kuh's (1994) taxonomy of outcomes as reflective thought, practical competence, and altruism.

To conclude this section, Kuh and Lund (1994) created the groundwork for expected developmental outcomes from participating in SGAs. Diorio (2007), Laosebikan-Buggs (2009), and Miles (2010) supported those original findings of Kuh and Lund (1994), but there is a glaring gap in the research literature on student involvement in student government specifically at HBCUs. Kuh and Lund only included one HBCU out of 105 schools in their original work. This particular topic is virtually nonexistent in the world of academia. Coupled with the previous statement, little focus has been given to examining the experiences of Black students who are elected to the office of SGA

President to understand their experiences and the factors that influence their experiences. The next section will focus on HBCUs to provide background context of the institutions and set the stage for this study.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

HBCUs were created to serve a unique purpose. Before 1865, it was illegal to educate Black people in this country given their status of enslaved people, which left an entire population destitute and uneducated about participating in modern society (Avery, 2009). This created a high demand for a specific type of institution—HBCUs—that could serve the Black community. This section will provide a historical overview of HBCUs, a brief description of their student populations, an outline of challenges they continue to face, and their significant contributions to society.

The end of the Civil War marked a new time for Black people including the birth of HBCUs. These schools were established and funded mostly by freed slaves, churches, and white philanthropic organizations (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Allen et al., 2007; Avery, 2009). The primary curricula taught during the 1800s centered on "basic skill development, including instruction on social skills, manual trades, and religious education" (Allen et al., 2007, p. 267). The first HBCUs were created with three goals in mind: "the education of Black youth, the training of teachers, and the continuation of the missionary tradition by educated Blacks" (Allen & Jewell, 2002, p. 244). These goals were designed to address immediate needs within the Black community because of slavery and the expanding reach of Christianity in the Black community. This new agenda led to the creation of schools such as Howard University, Fisk University, Atlanta

University, Hampton Institute, Dillard, Bennett College, Clark College, Morehouse, Spelman College, and Shaw University were created. However, it is important to note that these institutions were controlled by white missionaries to provide a traditional liberal arts-based curriculum to their students (Allen & Jewell, 2002).

Other schools like Hampton and Tuskegee broke away from the traditional liberal arts approach and focused on vocational/manual and industrial training. Allen and Jewell (2002) believed this movement began due to the "undercurrent of Black cultural inferiority" (p. 244) that existed among white philanthropists and missionaries. This model stressed the importance of basic reading and writing skills, laboring skills, and controlled political awareness. The students were taught "political accommodation through strict adherence to the South's racial codes" (p. 245). The model established at Hampton and Tuskegee would later become the standard for HBCU land-grant institutions.

Nearing the end of the 19th century, HBCUs began to expand with the adoption of the *Second Morrill Act of 1890.* This act allocated funding to public land-grant institutions which resulted in the creation of 17 land-grant HBCUs. With the expansion of land-grant HBCUs, higher education began to see an increase in Black student enrollment. According to Allen et al., (2007), "In 1900, 3,380 black college and professional students were enrolled in southern institutions … [by 1935] the south had grown to 29,000" (p. 268). The increase in student enrollment numbers could also be associated with open admission policies, which were adopted by most land-grant schools, or the admission of children from white missionaries, Native Americans, poor whites,

and international students. Additionally, most HBCUs during the early 1990s offered both secondary and college coursework with subsequent courses accounting for 90% of their offerings. The number of students enrolled in pre-college classes decreased by half over the next 30 years.

As the course offerings began to transform, small private HBCUs were transforming at the same rate as land-grant HBCUs. Scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois (2007) believed in the liberal arts educational approach. Du Bois advocated strongly against the Hampton and Tuskegee models, which drew tension between Booker T. Washington (principal of Tuskegee) and himself. Those tensions arose because Du Bois called for a classical educational approach, which he believed would produce more leaders than manual workers. In contrast, Booker T. Washington believed in an applied approach in various trades (Washington, 2013). Despite their differing methods, W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington would go on to use their influence to advocate on behalf of HBCUs (Fisk and Tuskegee) to educate Black people across the country.

Fast forwarding to the 1960s, HBCUs were once again in the legal spotlight during the height of the civil rights movement. Congress eventually passed the *Higher Education Act of 1965,* which officially created the Historically Black College and University designation. This act defined an HBCU as "any historically Black college or university that was established before 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans" (Higher Education Act, 1965, p.135). The *Higher Education Act of 1965* called for more state and federal funding for these institutions because of discrimination in land acquisition, financial resources, federal contracts, and

federal programs (Higher Education Act, 1995). This act was an excellent start to acknowledging and addressing some of the disparities between HBCUs and predominately White universities. However, this act was not an end all be all regarding equitable funding for HBCUs.

HBCUs continued to face financial challenges in the coming years. These problems were a result of inequitable funding from state governments (Chambers, 2013). In 1975, Jake Ayers, Sr. filed suit against the State of Mississippi citing disparities between state schools (*Ayers v. Allain*, 1987). The suit outlined seven complaints: student enrollment, maintenance of branch centers by white universities close to Black universities, employment of faculty and staff, facility conditions, funding allotment, academic program offerings, and racial composition of the governing board and staff (*Ayers v. Allain, 1987).* The case would eventually make it to the Mississippi Supreme Court after a decision in the lower courts, an appeal by the plaintiffs, and a decision by the fifth circuit court in favor of the plaintiffs (Chambers, 2013). The case was renamed *U.S. v. Fordice* because the Supreme Court agreed to hear it*.* The Mississippi Supreme Court upheld the fifth circuit court's decision but only at a price to Mississippi HBCUs. Settlements totaled approximately $503 million while also calling for diversification in Mississippi's HBCUs. The opinion of the Court read:

> If we understand private petitioners to press to order the upgrading of Jackson State, Alcorn State, Mississippi Valley State *"solely"* so that they may be publicly financed exclusively Black enclaves by private choice, we reject that request. The state provides these facilities for *all* its citizens. (*U.S. v. Fordice,* 1992, p. 743)

The verdict called for HBCUs to meet a 10% non-Black population while providing

funds for summer remediation programs (*Ayers v. Fordice,* 1995), eliminating the

establishment of white branch centers near HBCUs (*Ayers v. Fordice,* 1999), providing

financial support for facility upkeep (*Ayers v. Thompson*, 2004), and providing

"appropriate" state allocation and special funds. All in all, this settlement could be seen

as a win for Mississippi HBCUs. However, Chambers (2013) refuted the settlements by

stating that "the settlement fails to address key matters raised [by Jake Ayers] … the

amount awarded is inadequate to rectify discriminatory patterns in state allocations" (p.

913).

A similar case occurred in Alabama. In 1983, John Knight (lead plaintiff) filed

suit against the State of Alabama claiming, "…the state operated a racially dual system of

higher education and that vestiges of the dual system remain in violation of the Title VI

and the Fourteenth Amendment" (*Knight v Alabama, 1991*, p. 4). Similarly to *Ayers v.*

Allian, Knight v. Alabama, was a long, 25-year case with multiple decisions and appeals

(*Knight v. Alabama,* 1991; *Knight v. Alabama*, 1995); however, the court case resulted in

a win for Alabama State University and Alabama A&M University. The opinion of the

court read: "…the court finds that vestiges remain within the practices of some of the

defendants in the following areas: faculty and administrative employment, state funding

for higher education, facilities on the HBUs, admission policies, and program

duplication" (*Knight v. Alabama,* 1991, p. 1368). This led to a $20 million payout to both

institutions for capital needs, altering of Auburn University's admission policies,

elimination of unnecessary duplicate programs between state schools, and development

of a plan to recruit white students at Alabama State University.

The state created an endowment for scholarships at both universities, endowed

department chairs, increased faculty salaries, and new programs (*Knight v. Alabama,*

1995). In 2006, Alabama State University received additional money for facility

renovation and construction (*Knight v. Alabama*, 2006). As a result, both schools

received financial settlements from the State of Alabama. Notably, enrollment of Black

students at white institutions increased 195% throughout the litigation which brought into

question who the real winners of the lawsuit were.

HBCUs Today

The previous two cases are examples of challenges that HBCUs have faced since

their creation. HBCUs are still vital to the Black community and have made substantial

contributions to society while serving a unique student population. According to Allen et

al. (2007), "HBCUs play an important role in the perpetuation of Black culture, the

improvement of Black community life, and the preparation of the next generation of

black leadership" (p. 263). The leadership of HBCUs often articulate these roles. Esters

and Strayhorn (2013) labeled many HBCUs as "The People's University" that served the

underserved. The authors also argued that HBCUs promote racial equality and

community empowerment. These perceptions reinforce the original missions of HBCUs.

Similarly**,** Wenglinsky (1996) justified having HBCUs based on their student

impact. Wenglinsky (1996) reported, "African Americans at HBCUs had higher

educational aspirations than either African Americans at TWIs [Traditional white

Institutions] or whites at HBCUs [and] the interaction effect of HBCUs and ethnicity was positively related to professional aspirations" (p. 100). The authors asserted, "These schools are better at preparing African American students for professional life" (p. 101). Allen et al. (2007) made similar assertions:

> These institutions provide social capital and/or social networks, which serve as pathways to success for their students and graduates. HBCUs also continue to act as social equalizers for groups who have been denied equal opportunity in education and society at large. Regardless of the perils of HBCUs as educators of the Black youth and centers of social and political struggle, their local and societal values are immeasurable. (p. 273)

HBCUs have also been shown to provide more significant gains in student development for African American students when compared to their counterparts at predominately white institutions (PWI; Desousa & Kuh, 1996). Desousa and Kuh indicated that:

> Black students attending the HBI [HBCUs] devoted more considerable effort to academic activities than the Black students attending the PWI … Students attending the HBI [HBCUs] reported greater gains in personal and social development, critical thinking and science/technology, vocational and career skills, history and cultural awareness, and art and literature than the students enrolled at the PWI. (p. 261)

> Likewise, Freeman and Cohen (2001) argued, "HBCUs impact economic development through the labor market experiences of their graduates and the linkages with their neighboring communities" (p. 588). The authors placed value on the

psychological and cultural benefits that graduates of HBCUs exhibit. Freeman and Cohen also discussed the work of HBCUs with developing their surrounding communities through a wide array of community initiatives.

HBCUs contribute financially to the economy. According to the Economic Impact Report (2006) from the National Center for Education Statistics, HBCUs generate $6 billion in the gross regional product, $4 billion in employment income, and $6.6 billion initial spending in their local communities. Adding to this argument, Perna (2001) looked at the contributions of HBCUs concerning African American faculty's careers. Perna, utilizing a previous dataset collected by the National Center for Education Statistics, reported 40% of African American full-time faculty earned their bachelor's from an HBCU and 55% returned to teach at HBCUs. HBCUs contribute many full-time faculty members to institutions throughout the nation. These studies prove HBCUs have made significant contributions to society by providing opportunities and development to a variety of students.

Despite changing demographics across universities nationwide, HBCUs continue to educate students who are marginalized by society. In 2001, HBCUs consisted of approximately 300,000 students with 61% identifying as women (NCES, 2004). Out of all the students who attended an HBCU, 82% identified as Black and 77% of all HBCU students received a federal Pell grant (NCES, 2004). According to the NCES Minority Serving Institution report, 33% of HBCUs served a majority population of low-income students (Pell grant eligible) in 2004 (Xiaojie, 2007). These descriptive statistics provide an understanding of the type of students who attend HBCUs. However, researchers must

be cautious not to assume that these statistics are generalizable to all students or that these statistics predict identities among the students, stereotypes, educational preparedness, or even family backgrounds. Scholars must also recognize that HBCUs come in a variety of institutional types such as community colleges, public universities, and private universities.

HBCUs should no longer be overlooked or neglected in research. As shown above, HBCUs have and continue to add value to Black communities and the field of higher education. I have an obligation as a researcher to center my work in these institutions to illuminate experiences of students throughout their many forms of involvement on these campuses. In the following section, I will conceptualize the student involvement theory and the developmental influences concept from the leadership identity development model. These pieces combined will serve as the conceptual framework for the current study.

Conceptual Framework: Student Involvement Theory

Student involvement is a well-researched phenomenon in higher education for over a century (Astin, 1975, 1977, 1984, 1996; Flowers, 2004; Moore, Lovell, McGann, & Wyrick, 1998). This theory supports my overarching research topic because it aims to investigate the "physical and psychological energy" (Astin, 1984, p. 519) that SGA presidents devote to their experiences.

The theory is centered on the actions of the student. Astin (1984) stated, "Student involvement encourages educators to focus less on what they do and more on what the student does" (p. 522). SGA is a student led organization and the responsibility for it

should be on the students not the practitioners. My attention for this study is on the lived experiences of students and how external factors influence their experiences. In this section I will discuss student involvement by providing an in-depth analysis of student involvement and explain how student involvement is as a factor in student development.

Alexander Astin (1975) sought to identify the factors that impacted student retention rates. Astin found a common theme in his research—student involvement. He reported that students who were highly involved in college had higher retention rates than those who were not involved. As a result, Alexander Astin developed the student involvement theory. This theory posits five beliefs:

1. Involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy the student devotes to the academic experience;

2. Involvement occurs on a continuum;

3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features;

4. The amount of student learning and personal development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program;

5. The effectiveness of an educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement. (Astin, 1984, p. 519)

Astin, (1994) believed a student who was highly involved would devote considerable energy to studying, campus life, organizations, and interactions with faculty and other students. This leads to more developmental gains as a byproduct of active engagement in such activities. Astin (1984) asserted, "A typical uninvolved student neglects studies,

spends little time on campus, abstains from extracurricular activities, and has infrequent contact with faculty members and other students" (p. 518). Additionally, Astin believed, "The act of dropping out [of school] can be viewed as the ultimate form of non-involvement" (p. 524), which creates a juxtaposition between involved and uninvolved students.

Concerning the involved student, student involvement theory originally included six areas of student involvement: residential halls, honors programs, academic involvement, student-faculty interaction, athletic involvement, and student government. Alexander Astin identified these six areas based on his previous work of Astin (1977). This work focused on the impact of college on developmental outcomes using longitudinal data from over 200,000 students. Astin (1977) concluded most forms of student involvement led to greater gains in student development such as artistic interests, interpersonal self-esteem, and satisfaction with friendships.

However, some types of student involvement had adverse effects on students' development. Astin (1977) reported that students who were overly focused on academics were less likely to report gains in artistic interests, business interests, and hedonism. Astin found students that were actively involved in athletics had a decrease in business interests. These findings also support one of my beliefs that not all student involvement outcomes enhance the development of students. More research should be conducted to examine the intended and unintended hinderances of student development as a result of student involvement.

Overall, students must be intentional about their type of involvement to ensure that their goals of achieving certain outcomes are met. There is one notable issue when speaking of outcomes. How do scholars combine these benefits into broader themes so that researchers can have conversations across studies? To address that issue, I expand the current student involvement theory to identify and classify outcomes using a particular structure. The next part of this chapter will discuss Kuh's (1993) taxonomy of outcomes as a framework that will be used to classify the various outcomes.

When speaking about student involvement theory and the outcomes associated with it, numerous scholars have used Astin's (1984) work as a building block to create tools that help better categorize these outcomes using a common language. For example, Kuh (1993) interviewed 149 college seniors to identify the effects of out-of-class experiences on learning and personal development.

As a result of the study, Kuh (1993) identified 13 participant outcomes: self-awareness (self-examination/ spirituality), autonomy (decision making/responsibility), confidence and self-worth (self-esteem/self-respect), altruism (respect of others), reflective thought (critical thinking), social competence (teamwork/leadership), practical competence (organizational skills), knowledge acquisition (academic mastery), academic skills (reading/writing), application of knowledge (applying theory to practice), esthetic appreciation (appreciation for cultural matters/arts), vocational competence (skills for post-college employment), and sense of purpose (life goals).

Kuh (1993) also classified the 13 outcomes into five overarching domains: entitled personal competence, cognitive complexity, knowledge and academic skills,

altruism and estheticism, and practical competence. Kuh identified these domains based on similarities among the 13 outcomes. Out of the 13 outcomes, students reported gains in social competence, reflective thought, confidence, and practical competence the most, thus strengthening Astin's (1997) original findings that students learn and develop through being involved throughout campus organizations and programs.

In brief these outcomes that were identified by Kuh (1993) are similar to the outcomes that were discussed in the previous sections of this chapter. For example, Kuh found outcomes such as social competence and practical competence. Those findings were also reported by Flowers (2004) and Sturts and Ross (2013) which proves that Astin's (1997) assertions still held true over 10 years later.

Kuh's (1993) 13 outcomes are directly linked to the six areas of student involvement that Astin (1984) outlined previously. Twale and Sanders (1999) believed residential halls were a social influencer of critical thinking. By surveying 223 college juniors and seniors, the authors found thematic residential halls should be used to "encourage topical discussions of social and academic issues around students" (p. 142). Those discussions could lead to gains in critical thinking which were described in Kuh's (1993) taxonomy of outcomes.

Moreover, Inkelas and Weismas (2003) reported that students who participated in honors programs exhibited gains in interpersonal self-esteem, intellectual self-esteem, and artistic needs. The authors attributed these gains to students' direct access to faculty via honors programs. Inkelas and Weismas also found students who participated in honor programs were more likely to meet with faculty members outside the classroom. These

findings strengthen Kuh's (1993) work because he originally argued students who were actively involved in campus activities would demonstrate gains in self-confidence and self-esteem.

Moving forward, Huang and Chang (2004) studied the relationship between academic and co-curricular involvement in 627 third-year college students. They reported a positive correlation between academic and co-curricular involvement: "…gains in cognitive skills and communication skills are associated with both academic and co-curricular involvement" (p. 402). Similarly, Ullah and Wilson (2007) used the National Survey of Student Engagement to access academic achievement among students through student-faculty interaction. Huang and Chang (2004) and Ullah and Wilson (2007) reported similar findings to Kuh (1993) in the form of social competence, academic skills, and knowledge acquisition.

In addition to the outcomes relating to academic involvement, Chen, Synder, and Magner (2010) surveyed 163 student-athletes and 112 non-athlete students to identify perceived social relationships. The authors found students who participated in team sports reported higher ratings in social relationships and believed those relationships were one of the core benefits of athletic involvement. These findings are also aligned with the 13 taxonomy of outcomes by Kuh (1993).

Finally, Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, and Burkhardt (2001) reported that students who were involved in campus leadership programs had higher developmental gains than their peers. Cress et al. conducted a longitudinal study using the Cooperative Institutional Research Program which sought to determine if the involvement in

leadership programs enhanced students' leadership knowledge and skills. Cress et al. found students who were involved in leadership programs had positive growth and change in three leadership skills: "(decision-making abilities), values (sense of personal ethics), and cognitive understanding (understanding theories)" (p. 18). These three areas are similar to Kuh's (1993) findings on autonomy, self-awareness, and application of knowledge. Students who are involved in leadership programs have positive educational and developmental outcomes.

To sum it up, Astin's (1984) student involvement theory is one tool that can be used to understand the impact of involvement on a student's developmental outcomes. However, I would argue against using it alone. The student involvement theory places a high value on where students spend their time and dedicate their efforts, but it does not provide a clear outline on how to categorize those outcomes into domains. Thus, I applied Kuh's (1993) taxonomy of outcomes to Astin (1984) original work in order to better categorized the outcomes of student involvement theory.

Like other theories, no approach is without critique. Astin's (1984) original work failed to account for environmental factors such as mentors, peers, and meaningful involvement that was not necessarily designed to foster student learning. As previously mentioned, not all students have the same experiences throughout college based on racism. This theory alone will not be enough for this study because it lacks an understanding of the actual experiences and the external factors that play a pivotal role in students' experiences. This theory is designed to focus on the amount of time dedicated to the specific type of involvement and the outcomes associated with that dedication.

Student involvement theory focuses mainly on the cause and effect but not the why and how. Therefore, this theory must be coupled with another concepts that allows the researcher to take a deeper dive in hopes of understanding lived experiences that account for those internal and external influences.

The next section of this chapter will discuss the concept of developmental influences which were originally used as a component of the Leadership Identity Development Model (LID Model; Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005). This concept will serve as the second component of my conceptual framework. I seek to illustrate how developmental influences play a pivotal role in the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. I will provide an in-depth analysis of the origins of this concept and explain how developmental influences can also influence student's development specifically for Black SGA presidents at HBCUs.

Developmental Influences

A primary goal of colleges and universities is to help students become leaders (Dugan, 2006). However, leadership does not operate with a single definition. Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2013) outlined six foundational principles of leadership:

1. Leadership is a concern of all of us.
2. Leadership is viewed and valued differently by various disciplines and cultures.
3. Conventional views of leadership have changed.
4. Leadership can be exhibited in many ways.
5. Leadership qualities and skills can be learned and developed.

6. Leadership committed to ethical action is needed to encourage change and social responsibility. (pp. 6-7)

These beliefs led to the creation of the relational leadership model which is "an aspirational model … in developing and supporting a healthy, ethical, and effective group" (p. 96). The relational leadership model is not a theory, but a complex set of concepts that allow individuals to expand how they view leadership. This model is composed of five key concepts: purpose, process, inclusive, empowering, and ethical and was created to address how leadership might be practiced, not the outcomes of leadership. This paved the way for other frameworks, such as the leadership identity development model, that sought to address outcomes associated with leadership. Komives, Dugan, Owen, Slack, and Wagner (2011) described the relational leadership model as "the basis of the leadership identity development research" (p. 44).

Building on the relational leadership model, Komives and associates (2005) used grounded theory to examine how leadership identity develops. They conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with 13 participants which resulted in the emergence of "a dynamic process of developing a leadership identity" (p. 596). The authors stated, "Students had different experiences, came into awareness of themselves in a leadership context at different ages, identified a variety of ways these experiences and context had an impact on them, yet they engaged with the process in similar ways" (p. 596). These findings were categorized into five components: developmental influences, developing self, group influences, changing view of self with others, and a broadening view of leadership.

Moreover, Komives et al. (2005) defined each component in relation to their impact on leadership identity. First, they defined developmental influences as adult influences, peer influences, meaningful involvement, and reflective learning. The second component was developing self, focused on deepening self-awareness, building confidence, establishing interpersonal efficacy, applying new skills, and expanding motivations. Komives et al. defined group influences as engaging in groups, learning from membership continuity, and changing perceptions of groups. The fourth component, view of self, related to people going from dependent to interdependent. Lastly, a broader view of leadership was defined as viewing leadership from the lens of other people based on position, non-positional, or a process. As a result, each developmental outcome had a series of dimensions that showed throughout the six stages of the identity cycle. I will only focus on the developmental influences that best align with the aims of this study.

As it relates to developmental influences, Sheshane, Sturtevant, Moore, and Dooley (2012) used the Komives et al. (2005) model to examine factors that impacted undergraduate students' leadership experiences. The authors reported three themes (pre-college experiences, previous experiences, & external role models) related to developmental influences. Sheshane et al.'s (2012) findings of pre-college experiences and prior experiences are examples of Komives et al.'s (2005) meaningful involvement influences. Those pre-college experiences (elementary, middle, high school) and previous college experiences (coordinating events) influenced the future leadership experiences of their participants. The participants recalled those events to be relevant to their current roles by creating the foundation to their leadership identity. Sheshane et al., (2012) also

found external role models as key influences of the participants' current leadership experiences. The authors stated, "Students noted the impact of external role models, such as teachers and other family members" (Sheshane et al., 2005, 147). The external role model theme is an example of adult influences that Komives et al. (2005) outlined as a developmental influence. Furthermore, the model was constructed with an assumption that students transition from one stage to another.

Similarly, Lockett and Boyd (2012) applied the Komives et al. (2005) concept of developmental influence to the work of extension offices, specifically 4-H Youth Development Program. The authors described adult influences for the 4-H Youth Development as confidence builders and early building blocks of support. They believed these adults played a pivotal role in assisting students in the leadership identity model. Next, Lockett and Boyd (2012) outlined the impact of peer influences. They stated, "Peer involvement from active volunteer members is a great source of aid in learning and orientation of new volunteers" (p. 236). Peer influence allows for learning and development amongst the volunteers who helped enhance the leadership experiences of the students. Finally, Lockett and Boyd discussed a wide array of learning opportunities that served as different types of meaning involvement. The authors stated, "These experiences enable volunteers to experience diverse peers and program participants, learn more about self, and develop new skills" (p. 236). Lockett and Boyd believed those experiences impacted the leadership experiences of their volunteers.

In conclusion, developmental influences must be included in any research that seeks to understand the experiences of student leaders. I have incorporated student

involvement theory (Astin, 1984) with the three aspects of the developmental influences

concept (Komives et al., 2005; see Figure 1). Research proves student involvement in

SGA impacts the experiences of those students on college campuses (Diorio, 2007) and

adult influences, peer influences, and meaningful involvement are critical factors in the

everyday experiences of SGA presidents (Kuh, 1994; Miles, 2010). These experiences as

SGA presidents are influenced by interactions with adult influences (advisors, faculty

members, staff, executive administrators, board members, alumni, and other

stakeholders), peer influences (student government members, friends, family, and

classmates), and meaningful involvement (board meetings, hiring committees, receptions,
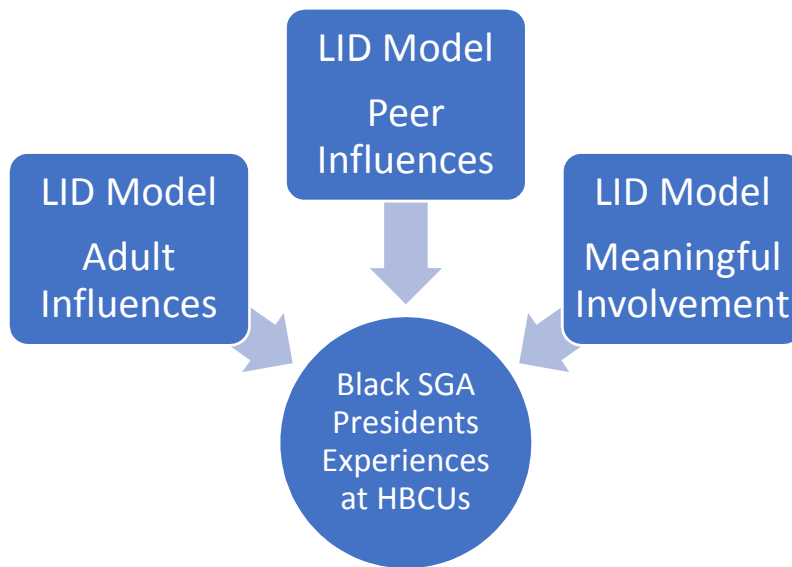
football games, SGA meetings, and protest).

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

Given the aforementioned, I sought to expand the current body of literature by

examining the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. This approach is unique

because it seeks go beyond the context of predominately white institutions which most of the current literature is situated in.

Chapter Summary

In summary, chapter two revealed the most pertinent literature pertaining to this particular study. First, I provided a case that illustrated the importance of Black student involvement. I showed Black student involvement positively impacts student retention and persistence. Second, I highlighted the outcomes associated with various types of Black student involvement. The literature described these outcomes as critical thinking, self-confidence, educational gains (higher GPAs), social skills, etc. Next, I provided another perspective to Black student involvement relating to the negative aspects of being involved. Although it is not commonly discussed in the literature, students also experience hinderances such as lower GPAs and lower retention and academic success.

Afterwards, I provided a historical analysis of SGA and provided more insight to the specific outcomes associated with students participating in SGA. Then I offered an historical analysis on HBCUs while providing a rational for further research on Black student involvement at these institutions. Finally, I elaborated on the conceptual framework that will be used to ground this study. I merged student involvement theory, with developmental influences from the LID Model to illustrate how experiences with student involvement are influenced by certain factors.

In the next chapter, I discuss the process in which the research was carried out which includes the epistemological perspective, methodology, participants criteria and recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. First, this chapter will discuss my positionality, hermeneutic phenomenological and the research design. Next, I outline the participant selection of Black SGA presidents, and photo elicitation interviews as data collection methods. Lastly, I use hermeneutic thematic data analysis to making meaning of the data while ensuring trustworthiness of this study.

Positionality

This study was birthed from my personal experience being an SGA President at an HBCU. In 2011, I was elected to serve as the next SGA President for Alabama State University. This experience had an everlasting impact on my life. I now reflect on the different influences that impacted me as a student during my tenure, but during that time I sometimes found it difficult to articulate and make meaning of my experience.

The first influence that comes to mind are the various administrators, faculty, staff, and alumni who played a pivotal role in my development and well-being as a student. The first two individuals were my advisors—one was a previous SGA president and the other was my business fraternity advisor. They were my ride-or-die people who were the exemplars of what advisors should be. They not only advised me on SGA matters, but they also ensured that I was mentally, physically, and spiritually well.

I recall having numerous conversations with my advisors and support team about self-care and the importance of being healthy in order to serve the student body efficiently. I did not always understand their logic, but I never had to question whether

they had my best interests at heart. These two individuals made sure that I stayed focused and kept the students' interests first. I look at these individuals now as a big brother and another mother.

The next significant influence that impacted my experience as an SGA president were my peers. My peers were divided into three categories; friends, colleagues, and the student body. I had supportive friends. They were the primary reason I was elected. During this time, my friends were there when all hell broke loose. They were the group who supported me regardless of my wild ideas. However, that support was not always free. My friends eventually became "needy" and wanted special privileges such as first dibs on trips, t-shirts, game tickets, and the list went own. These demands eventually took a toll on me and our friendship. This was my first introduction to nepotism.

The second category of peers were my colleagues. I was fortunate to have colleagues within SGA who shared similar passions and beliefs in regard to student advocacy. They supported most of my initiatives and ultimately, my colleagues were the people who kept me going. They placed high expectations on me as a leader and I refused to disappoint them.

The third category of peers for me was the student body. This group was the driving force for my passion. They were the reason for the early mornings and all-nighters. I pledged to serve them at all costs, and sometimes those costs were pricey. I would not change their expectations, accountability, or demands for the world. The student body taught me to have multiples perspectives, to be selfless, and to serve from within. And I am forever indebted to them for those lessons.

The final factor that influenced my experiences were multiple events and activities I participated in as the SGA president. I will focus on one incident in particular. I was appointed to the presidential search committee, which was tasked with selecting and nominating the next president of our university. This process lasted the entire length of my presidency. I participated in months of meetings that ranged from creating a job posting to interviewing candidates. This experience was meaningful to me because it exposed me to another world of Black excellence that I was previously unaware of. For example, I remember reviewing the applicants' curriculum vitae and noticing the accomplishments and impact they had on the community throughout their careers. This particular experience sealed my career desires.

My previous experiences have sparked my curiosity around the experiences of other Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. I am intrigued to see if their experiences are similar to the ones I spoke of in the previous sections. This curiosity coupled with the current body of literature informed my research question which birthed this study. In closing, I seek to understand the experiences of other Black SGA presidents at HBCUs.

Research Design

Research is more than just collecting data and reporting findings. Lochmiller and Lester (2017) defined research as "a systematic investigation designed to make sense of complex, everyday problems that impact your work as a professional educator" (p. 4). Connecting research to everyday practice should be the primary commitment of the researcher. The researcher must ensure the goodness of their work by being transparent and connecting the dots for their readers. Armino and Hultgren (2002) stated:

Goodness requires that the elements of the meaning making process are illustrated; epistemological and theoretical foundations are linked to the selected methodology; and that the method of data collection and its analysis are, offering new understanding that leads to improved practice. (p. 446)

This chapter is guided by Armino and Hultgren's six elements of goodness to ensure that situatedness, trustworthiness, and authenticity are met. This language of goodness will allow me to rethink how validity and reliability are achieved in qualitative research. We should not hide behind the systemic ways of knowing or measurements of rigor that are based solely on objective facts or numbers. Goodness allows qualitative researchers to be more creative and illuminating when offering evidence of goodness.

Epistemological Stance

As a researcher, I seek to study problems of practice in a systematic way which allows me to understand the organization I hope to improve. Before researchers can understand the issues of practice, we must understand ourselves and how we come to know reality. The foundation of all research is rooted in the beliefs and assumptions of researchers. Glesne (2016) asserted, "Researchers sometimes are not aware of these influences because they are embedded in the researchers' suppositions about the nature of reality and knowledge" (p. 5). Our thoughts, assumptions, and values impact the ways in which we come to gain knowledge. Torres and Magolda (2002) stated, "Incorporating oneself into the culture being observed is essential" (p.476). It is crucial that researchers become one with our research by first understanding our philosophical and theoretical beliefs about reality and knowledge.

In accordance with the goodness criteria, epistemology should guide the selection of a theoretical perspective that informs how the methodology is chosen (Armino & Hultgren, 2002). The current study is framed using the constructivist paradigm. Lochmiller and Lester (2017) outlined constructivism as the assumption "that there are multiple realities that can be studied and that the researcher derives his or her understanding of these realities by working with and through the participants' perspectives of a given phenomenon" (p.13). This paradigm allows me to co-create the findings of this research study based on the lived experiences of participants. I subscribe to the belief that there are multiple realities that could be studied, and it is my job to work with and through the participants to understand their perspectives.

In order to build rapport and trust, I actively engaged with participants throughout the research process (Torres & Magolda 2002). I was an instrument of the study and could not separate myself with an objective lens. According to Stewart (2010), "Constructivism considers the researcher as a vital instrument in the collection and interpretation of data" (p. 292). It was my job as the researcher to accurately collect, analyze, and disseminate the findings according to the goodness criteria of qualitative research. In building rapport, I was able to empathize with the participants which led to the development of authentic relationships. The participants trusted me with their narratives and were willing to welcome me into stories they have never told anyone else. As a qualitative researcher, I was able to probe deep within their narratives to extract meaning of their lived experiences.

Methodology

To meet the criteria for goodness, the methodology must be driven by the epistemological stance (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). In accordance with the constructivist paradigm, I will be employing a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology to examine lived experiences of SGA presidents. The goal of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of influences that impact the experiences of SGA presidents. I must first understand their lived experiences. Arminio and Hutlgren stated, "Methodology is dependent upon the epistemological and theoretical assumptions, and a clear question to be explored" (p. 452). This study warrants the use of the hermeneutic philosophy because my assumptions of multiple realities are guided by the constructivist perspective and the research question necessitates the use of phenomenology (van Manen, 1990).

The philosophy of phenomenology is commonly employed in qualitative research. van Manen (1990) defined phenomenology as "the study of lived experiences … the explication of phenomena as they present themselves" (p. 9). The primary goal of phenomenology is to understand the lifeworld and how people reflect on it. Moreover, phenomenology is presented in three forms: the structure of parts to a whole, the structure of identity in a manifold, and the structure of presence and absence (Sokolowski, 2000). Each of these three structures are intertwined but are presented in their simplest forms. The structure of parts to a whole can be identified as independent pieces to whole structures (Sokolowski, 2002). This means that multiple experiences can be forged together to define a larger experience.

Next, the structure of identity in a manifold is defined as "the identical fact [that] can be expressed in a manifold of ways" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 28). Researchers may

view experiences from different perspectives, but the identity of the perspectives remains constant. Lastly, the structure of presence and absence eludes to the idea that something is there or not there. An example of this structure is the thought of what is being said and what is not being said. This ideal allows the research to further explore the essence of the experience which is included and excluded.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Moving to a specific phenomenological approach, van Manen (1990), defined hermeneutic phenomenology as "interpretation of experience via some text or via symbolic form" (p. 25). Hermeneutic phenomenology is similar yet different from other forms of phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology employs the foundational aspects of phenomenology and requires the researcher to utilize an interpretational aspect to the lived experience. The goal of hermeneutic phenomenology slightly expands the traditional phenomenological methodology. According to Aagaard (2017), "Its epistemological goal is to interpret the texts of life in descriptions that are evocative and powerful" (p. 524). Hermeneutic phenomenology promotes multiple interpretations which directly align with the constructivist epistemological beliefs.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is most appropriate for the current study because I seek to understand the lived experiences of SGA presidents at an HBCU. Additionally, hermeneutic phenomenology allows the researcher to ask questions such as "what is this or that kind of experience like?" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). The research questions that will guide this study were informed using a conceptual framework from the Leadership Identity Development model (Komives et al., 2005). This framework outlined four

developmental influences that impacted the experiences of student leaders. However, the questions for this study will focus on three factors: meaningful involvement, adult influences, and peer influences. The guiding research questions for this study are:

1. How do Black SGA presidents at HBCUs make meaning of their experiences?

2. How do administrators, faculty, staff, peers, and meaningful involvement influence the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs?

Moreover, hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology helps the researcher gain a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of experiences by using insightful descriptions. These insightful descriptions are looked upon as reflections. van Manen (2002) stated, "Phenomenological reflections are not introspective but retrospective. Reflections on lived experiences are always recollective; it is a reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through" (p. 10). The use of hermeneutic phenomenological methodology will allow me to help participants reflect on their lived experiences in hopes of illuminating rich and meaningful descriptions about their lived experiences of SGA president at an HBCU.

Participant Selection

The participant sample is a critical component of any research study and is determined based on the research question and design of the study. According to Lochmiller and Lester (2017), "Sampling considerations [in qualitative research] are less concerned with identifying individuals or sites who represent the population than they are with identifying theoretically important, descriptively valuable perspectives, experiences, or particular individuals" (p.140). The overall goal of qualitative research in education is

to provide in-depth information about a specific problem of practice. Educational researchers from the constructivist paradigm seek to uncover multiple realities that exist around a problem of practice (Stewart, 2002).

Therefore, participants must be intentionally selected to reflect the research topic and methodology. According to van Manen (1990), the emphasis of phenomenological research "is always on the meaning of the lived experience" (p. 62). Lochmiller and Lester (2017) eluded to using phenomenology to describe how a phenomenon is universally experienced. Participants must have commonalities among their lived experiences, so I utilized a purposeful sampling technique to recruit participants for this study. Lochmiller and Lester referred to purposeful sampling as "a qualitative approach in which you select individuals or sites on the basis of specific criteria" (p. 264). Similarly, Patton (2015) described purposeful sampling as "selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being incorporated" (p. 264). It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure the quality of his or her participants to answer the research question and reflect on their experiences (Armino & Hultgren, 2002). I used purposeful sampling to select participants who can speak to and make meaning of their lived experiences as SGA presidents at an HBCU. I elaborate on the criteria that was used for this study in the following section.

Participant Criteria

In keeping with the criteria for goodness, the researcher and participants must be able to reflect on the phenomenon which is being studied. Arminio and Hultgren (2002) stated, "Researchers must reflect upon their relationship with their participants and their

relationships with the phenomenon under exploration" (p. 450). Hermeneutic phenomenology entails a retrospective approach. van Manen (1990) viewed reflection as a recollective approach to a past experience. He also asserted to the difficulties of reflecting on experiences while living through them. I agree with van Manen. Trying to reflect on and live through an experience simultaneously is difficult because you may not have had the opportunity to process your emotions or environmental factors that impacted the experience. This study used the ideals of van Manen (1990) and Arminio and Hultgren (2002) to inform the participant criteria. The participants in this study had to meet the following criteria:

1) Self-identify as Black or African American

2) been elected as the SGA executive president by the student body for one term at an HBCU;

3) had at least one year between their SGA presidential term and this study; and

4) served as SGA executive president within the last 15 years.

The participant criteria are aligned with the focus of this study and lends itself to answering the research questions (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). The criteria were designed so the participants have the capacity to answer the research questions which are specifically tailored towards the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. Lochmiller and Lester (2017) stated, "qualitative studies reply heavily on the participants experiences" (p. 34). It was also important to add a time gap between the lived experience and participating in the study. I wanted the participants to have enough time removed from their lived experiences to process and make meaning of those experiences.

69

This piece of the criteria is supported by van Manen (1990) hermeneutic phenomenology recollective beliefs which were mentioned in the previous paragraph. I also decided to add a 15-year timeframe given the use of photo-elicitation. I wanted to ensure each participant would have access to suitable photographs from their presidential tenure in order to assist in telling their stories.

Given the specific criteria of this study, it is important to note why certain factors were not included. This study did not seek to address a specific gender group nor does it attempt to examine the experiences of all SGA officers. I acknowledge the gender disparities that exist in society, but that phenomenon goes beyond the scope of this study. I also believe the SGA president position is different from other positions in SGA. The SGA president role entails a heighten level of responsibility compared to other roles within SGA. This role is also one of the least researched positions among student leadership roles. This study is specifically focused on the position of the president in order to examine those shared experiences that might exist. Next, I will discuss the recruitment process for this study.

Participant Recruitment

Patton (2015) recommended several approaches to recruiting participates in accordance with purposeful sampling. I chose to use a snowball recruitment technique to enlist participants for this study. Patton defined snowball recruitment as the ability to "create a chain of interviews based on people who know people who would be good sources given the focus of inquiry" (p. 270). I used my personal connections with previous SGA presidents from HBCUs across the country to recommend and recruit

participants for this study. I reached out via telephone and email to existing contacts (see Appendix B). I used social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and GroupMe to promote the study in hopes of gaining contact information for potential participants (see Appendix G).

Along similar lines, qualitative research differs from quantitative research in sample size. According to Patton (2015), "Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples" (p. 264). My goal was to recruit up to 10 participants for the study in hopes of reaching saturation with in-depth content for each participant. Next, I will outline how I collected data for this study.

<p style="text-align:center">Data Collection Methods</p>

In keeping with the goodness criteria, the methods for this study are directly aligned with hermeneutic phenomenology methodology. This approach seeks to explore how human beings make meaning of their lived experiences (Patton, 2015). It is vital to the study that the researcher employs the most appropriate methods which would allow the research to illuminate these experiences. Patton stated, "Qualitative inquiry collects data from in-depth interviews, focus groups, open-ended questions on a survey" (p. 255). Qualitative methods allow the researcher to take a deeper dive into the phenomenon with full attention to details and the various nuances of the experiences. Given the aforementioned, I used photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) as the data collection tool for this study which will be described below.

Interviews

There is an old saying that *"a picture is worth a thousand words*." This idea still

holds true. As a millennial, pictures are used throughout many forms of communications, especially via social media. For example, Instagram is a popular outlet where users disseminate photographs on a public platform as a representation of their emotions, motivations, hardships, or daily lives (Hu, Manikonda, & Kambhampti, 2014). Pictures allow people to express themselves freely without being constrained by words. I used this approach with my participants during photo-elicitation interviews.

Photographs allow participants to "explain their own lives in a more deep and meaningful way" (Boucher, 2018). With the use of photographs, participants are no longer restricted to the use of words. Boucher (2018) believed using photos would allow the researcher to extract longer, genuine responses about their lived experiences. This particular use of photos "stimulates reflections, support memory recall, and elicit stories as part of interviewing" (Patton, 2015, p. 484). Photo-elicitation interviews support and strengthen the primary goal of qualitative research which is to gain an in-depth understanding of a context. I plan to use photo-elicitation as a way to evoke comments, memory recollection, and discussion throughout two semi-structured interviews (Banks & Zeitlyn, 2015).

Initial meeting. One of the essential concepts of goodness is building a relationship with participants. Arminio and Hultgren (2002) stated, "Researchers must reflect upon their relationship with their participants and their relationship with the phenomenon under exploration" (p. 454). First, I conducted an initial meeting with the participants to collect demographic information and build rapport (see Appendix C). My goal as the researcher was not to present myself as an expert, but as a facilitator so

participants were given the space to reflect and make meaning of their experiences. These 30-60 minute video meetings took place via Facetime, Google Hangout, or Skype. I introduced myself and reviewed the rationale behind the study, including my positionality and assumptions around the research questions. Arminio and Hultgren (2002) urged all researchers to state their intentions, biases, and assumptions clearly. Next, I presented the opportunity for participants to introduce themselves and their reasons for participating in the study. The next part of the meeting consisted of outlining the goals of the study and reviewing informed consent forms. Each participant had the opportunity to opt out of the study if they so choose. If they decided to move forward, I discussed their role and expectations of the study (see Appendix D). I explained the process for participating in this study which included instructions for collecting or taking photographs in response to a given prompt, submitting the photographs (see Appendix E), and participating in an in-person semi-structured interview and a member checking follow-up.

Semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview with the participants was an in-person photo-elicitation interview (see Appendix F). Harper (2002) defined photo-elicitation as "inserting a photograph into a research interview" (p. 13). Upon the arrival of participants to each interview, I reiterated the informed consent (see Appendix A) and allowed the participant another opportunity to opt out of the study. After consent was given, the numbered photographs were displayed across the table. The photographs were numbered so that I can reference which photo was discussed on the transcript. I began the interview by providing the participants with an opportunity to discuss any or all of the photographs in-depth relating to the specific prompts and meanings behind each

photograph. Wang and Burris (1994) believed photos empowered the participants to become experts of their own lives and experiences. I asked probing questions to clarify or gain a more in-depth understanding of their experiences. Ultimately, each interview lasted 60-90 minutes in length. The interview was recorded using Mac application Garage Band as the primary source and the iPhone application Voice Recorder as the secondary source. I used a notebook to take notes during the interview in order to capture expressions, body language, and vital moments throughout the interview.

Member checking. After transcribing the semi-structured interview, I employed member checking via Facetime, Google Hangout, or Skype. Member checking gave participants the opportunity to verify findings and representations of data. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2004) referred to member checking as a tool that could "improve the quality of both the data and the final conclusions" (p.58). I presented overarching themes and notable quotes to participants to ensure that I was representing their experiences and their truth. This approach is vital as I must adhere to the hermeneutic phenomenological approach which requires researchers to understand how participants describe and make meaning of their lived experiences (Patton, 2015). Participants in this study had a voice in the presentation of their lived experiences. Next, I will discuss the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

Following the goodness criteria prescribed by Arminio and Hultgren (2002), goodness requires the researcher to employ an analysis technique guided by the methodology and data collection method. I analyzed the data using a hermeneutic

thematic analysis. The goodness criteria compel the researcher to participate in the interpretation and meaning-making process. Arminio and Hultgren stated, "Researchers must embrace the topic … [which] occurs through serious analysis of transcribing the text" (pp. 454-455). I will not bracket my experiences while analyzing data; I used my experiences to assist in the meaning making process of participants' lived experiences. This approach is best suited for this methodology and data collection methods because it allows the researcher to engage in the process of "making something of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning" (van Manen, 1990, p. 79). The goal of this analysis was to interpret and make meaning of the lived experiences with the participants.

Before outlining the steps of hermeneutic thematic analysis, I want to provide clarity to the meaning of this approach. van Manen (1990) defined theme analysis as "the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work (p. 78). van Manen also used a couple of guidelines to define the meaning of a theme. First, he defined a theme as "the experience of focus, of meaning, of point" (p. 87). The researcher may not accept an anecdote as a theme but seek to understand the essence of the anecdote. Second, van Manen stated: "themes are not objects one encounters at certain points or moments in the text" (p. 78). This means themes cannot be simplified to a simple thing, yet themes are a collections or representations of essences. Lastly, van Manen described a theme as "the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand" (p.78). Themes are only aspects of the entire structure of the lived experience.

All in all, thematic analysis is the best-suited approach for this study which will

allow me to recover and label the aspects of the lived experiences of SGA presidents at an HBCU. The following section describes how used the work of Patterson and Williams (2002) as a guide to employ a hermeneutic thematic analysis.

As previously mentioned, the methodological framework and data collection methods should inform the data analysis. I used hermeneutic thematic analyses to analyze the transcripts from my interviews. I followed three steps to analyze my data: develop an organizing system, identify and mark meaning units, and develop and label thematic codes (Patterson & Williams, 2002). These three steps allowed me to present the lived experiences of the participants to future readers in a way that the experiences can be understood from participants' lens.

In organizing the data, I reviewed each audio file, interview memo, and transcript multiple times. Next, I organized each transcript into different sections using the LID Model conceptual framework and questions posed to the participants (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). After separating the data into sections, I employed a holistic coding approach. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, (2014) defined this approach as "preparatory approach to a unit of data before a more detailed coding or categorization process through first or second cycle methods" (p. 75). This first run through provided me with enough information to summarize the interviews in my researcher memo and make comments which would be used in a later round of coding.

Next, I developed a Microsoft Excel document template in preparation for step two of the coding process. This template was used as an organizational resource which allowed me to quickly sort and organize different components of the data. The excel

document consisted of the following column headers: pseudonym, question asked, apriori code, sub-code, comment, research question, and connection to the research question.

Next, I engaged in a second round of coding. This round consisted of identifying and marking meaning units. Patterson and Williams (2002) defined meaning units as "actual statements from the interview, they represent the hard data or evidence that the research will use to persuade the reader that the analysis and interpretations are warranted" (p. 47). This step involved deductive coding based on the research questions. I identified statements from the participants regarding administrators, faculty, staff, peers, and meaningful involvement. I then used those statements to construct a concept map to organize common sentiments from all participants. Patterson and Williams (2002) stated, "Seeing, understanding, and explain the interrelationships among themes is one of the key features of hermeneutic analysis that offers the possibility of a holistic and insightful interpretation" (p. 48). The concept map helped me identify patterns and relationships among the participants' responses.

After grouping similar statements together, I labeled these groupings with a theme for each concept map (Miles et al., 2014). In making meaning of the data, I highlighted the structures of each experience. After I uncovered the themes, I returned to the transcripts to ensure that I have the most salient and appropriate examples to support those findings. In order to abide with the goodness criteria, I had to use quotations that adequately represent the themes which were uncovered. Armino and Hultgren (2002) asserted, "researchers are required to examine, expose, and explain then illustrate with examples this un-loosening and uncovering. There is a clear link between the text,

coding, or thematizing and interpretation" (p. 456). After selecting representative quotations and identifying emergent themes, I emailed my general findings and synopsis to participants to gather feedback as a form of member checking. This feedback was used to ensure accuracy of my findings based on their actual lived experiences.

In sum, I will use hermeneutic thematic analysis to present the most accurate and well-represented experiences of SGA presidents at an HBCU. The next section of this chapter will discuss the trustworthiness of this study.

Trustworthiness

All researchers should take appropriate steps to establish and ensure the goodness of their research by providing a clear explanation of data collection and analysis procedures (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). One way to ensure goodness is by applying the four concepts of trustworthiness to the study. Lockmiller and Lester (2017) defined trustworthiness as, "The degree to which your data collection, analysis, and presentation of the findings are presented in a thorough and verifiable manner. This section will be used to discuss the four aspects of trustworthiness of naturalistic research (creditability, transferability, dependability, & confirmability) as outlined by Guba (1981).

Credibility

Unlike some quantitative researchers, most qualitative researchers are less concerned with guarding against competing factors and are more interested in considering all of the factors at play (Guba, 1981). Qualitative researchers use those complexities to add to the richness of their data. The goal of establishing credibility is to "deal with the patterns in their entirety but to take specific actions that take account of the

complexities (Guba, 1981, p. 84). Credibility was established in this study by employing triangulation and providing a space for participants to member check findings.

Transferability

What is research without applicability? Lockmiller and Lester (2017) argued all research should provide significant contributions to the field. Transferability allows researchers to circle back to the origin of all educational research, which is to address a problem of practice. Guba (1981) described three steps to ensuring transferability: purposive sampling, collecting thick descriptive data, and developing thick descriptions. Transferability was met in this study by selecting an appropriate group of participants that will be able to answer research questions by providing rich descriptive data based on their lived experiences. Next, the interview protocol allows for duplication of the research study for similar groups at comparable institutions. Lastly, supplemental information is provided in the appendixes that further elaborate on all contextual factors.

Dependability

Guba (1981) argued, "[Researchers] must make allowance for apparent instabilities arising either because different realities are being tapped or because of instrumental shifts stemming from developing insights on the part of the investigator-as-instrument" (p. 86). I met the criteria of dependability by collecting multiple sources of data. I used photo-elicitation interviews as a method to collect data. The sources of data were photographs, fieldnotes, and audio-taped interview transcripts. These sources ensured the study has rich rigor according to Lochmiller and Lester (2017) because the data sources are appropriate, abundant, and sufficient.

Confirmability

Confirmability is another concept to ensure the trustworthiness of a study. Guba (1981) believed, "An inquirer should provide documentation for every claim from at least two sources" (p. 87). I provided multiple viewpoints from two or more participants that support each independent claim. Confirmability also calls for reflexivity. I practice dreflexivity by keeping a researcher memo in the form of audio and written reflections. Lastly, Guba (1981) encouraged researchers to inform participants of their epistemological assumptions and reveal how the findings will be formatted based on those assumptions. I discussed my assumptions that guided the study in the initial rapport building interview.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the research design for my study. First, I outlined my positionality by addressing the motivations behind the study and my assumptions. I then explained my epistemological stance which aligns with the constructivist paradigm. Third, I explain why and how I would employ a hermeneutic phenomenological methodological approach followed by the description of the methodology. I discussed the participant selection process and how I recruited participants while outlining the data collection process in which I employed photo-elicitation interviews. I then talked about the hermeneutic thematic analysis process which was used to making meaning of the data. Finally, I discussed how this study met the four components of trustworthiness.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of Black student government (SGA) presidents at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). I utilized a phenomenological perspective to examine how peers, administrators, faculty, staff, and meaningful involvement influenced the SGA presidents' experiences. This study was guided by the following research questions: a) how do Black SGA presidents make meaning of their experiences? and b) how do administrators, faculty, staff, peers, and meaningful involvement influence the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs?

As seen in Figure 2, I identified emergent themes based on the previous mentioned interview questions. First, I identified three emergent themes related to peer influences: (a) conflict, (b) developing relationships, and (c) support. The participants described conflict as negative encounters with peers. Next, the participants defined developing relationships as the ability to build bonds and networks with their peers. Lastly, the participants referred to peer support as physical presence and mental backing provided throughout their tenure as SGA presidents.

Next, I found two emergent themes related to administrators, faculty, and staff. The first theme was lack of support. The participants discussed lack of support as not being provided with the necessary tools and resources to be successful. However, the participants also discussed having support. They defined support as the ability to provide resources and tools to assist with various situations regarding their SGA experiences.

Lastly, I found three emergent themes regarding meaningful involvement: (a) sense of accomplishment, (b) inspiration, and (c) developing relationships. The

participants defined sense of accomplishment as a feeling of achievement or a proud moment. Next, they defined inspiration as a feeling of motivation or a boost in energy to achieve a goal. The participants alluded to their experiences with meaningful involvement as opportunities to expand their networks with various individuals.

Peer	Administrators, Faculty, & Staff	Meaningful Involvement
Conflict	Support	Sense of Accomplishment
Developing Relationships	Lack of Support	Inspiration
Support		Developing Relationships
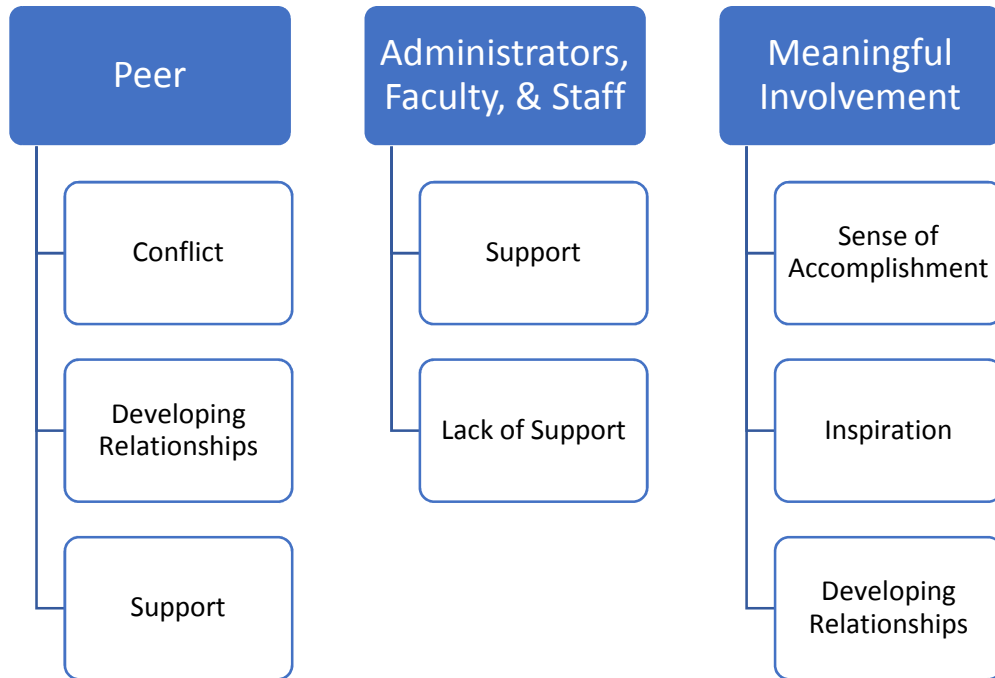
Figure 2. Depiction of emergent themes.

  In this chapter, I illuminate the details of the findings from this study. First, I provide a descriptive profile of each participant. Second, I discuss the emergent themes which were organized using the three concepts of the leadership identity development model (LID Model) from my conceptual framework: peer influences, adult influences (administrators, faculty, staff), and meaningful involvement (Komives et al., 2005). I provide detailed accounts of each theme with supporting quotations and photographs from the participants' interviews. Lastly, I will provide a chapter summary.

Introduction to Study Participants

As indicated in Table 1, this study included nine participants with four identifying as women and five identifying as men. Each participant identified as Black and served as a Student Government (SGA) president at an Historically Black College or University (HBCU) between the years of 2010-2017. The participants varied in geographical locations, undergraduate major, and age. The following section provides a more detailed description of each participant.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participants	Undergraduate University	Major	Gender (Man/Woman)	Age
PJ	Georgia University	Middle Grade Education	Man	28
Ace	Legacy University	Physical Education	Man	29
Kayla	The Hidden Gem University	Business Administration	Woman	27
Flash	Legacy University	Physical Education	Man	25
Ashley	Uncertainty University	Social Science	Woman	34
Riley	Smoketown College	Social Work	Man	23
Lucky 7	Great Place University	Mass Communication	Man	29
Ri Ri	Illustrious University	Psychology	Woman	24
Jourdan Paris Paris	St. Francis University	English	Woman	27

Note. Pseudonyms were used for participants and undergraduate universities.

PJ

PJ identified as a 28-year-old Black man from Georgia. He is a middle school counselor with a Georgia public school system. He attended Georgia University (pseudonym) for his undergraduate degree where he majored in middle grade education. Georgia University is a small four-year public HBCU located in southeastern United States. In addition to SGA, PJ was an active member in multiple campus organizations

such as Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., the Center for the Study of African American, Man Mentor, Sigma Alpha Pi National Honor Society, Campus Ambassadors, and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund.

My interview with him took place on a Friday morning in a private study room in a public city library in southeast Georgia. The library was small in size but had an intimate feel. The vibe came off as a welcoming space with warm hearted staff members who were eager to assist us in any way. As an opening question to the interview, I asked PJ to share one word that described his experience at the HBCU he attended. He replied with the word "life-changing."

> I would say life changing because I met some lifelong friends while I was at the university, and it just gave me a lot of opportunities to advance my career, as well, after graduation. So, it definitely was a life changing experience for me while there.

He went on to discuss how Georgia University shaped his career and allowed him to develop into the person he is today. Finally, I asked PJ to describe one characteristic or trait that best describes him. He replied with the word, "integrity."

> I would say integrity because I'm a person that, throughout my term when people came to me with issues, whether someone was right there looking or not, I always handled it the way that I told them I would. I could be trusted to always do the right thing to advance our campus.

In sum, PJ appeared to be a collaborative leader who always had the students' interest in mind.

Ace

Ace identified as a 29-year old Black man from the state of Florida. He is a

technology coordinator at a middle school in an Alabama public school system. He

attended Legacy University for his undergraduate degree where he majored in physical

education. Legacy University is a four-year public HBCU located in the southeastern part

of the United States. The university has an estimated student population of 4,500

students. Outside of SGA, Ace was an active member in campus organizations such as

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., the National Association for the Advancement of

Colored People, HYPER Club, and Student Alabama Education Association.

Ace's interview took place on a Friday evening on the campus of Legacy

University in a residential facility conference room. The facility was occupied with

summer school students who were participating in the university's bridge program. Ace

works as a part-time residential supervisor. As an opening question to the interview, I

asked to share one word that described his experience at an HBCU. He replied

"developing."

> I say developing because I've been through so much during my time at Legacy
>
> University, from a student who only got accepted to two universities, to a student
>
> who became homeless after their third semester, to a student who owed $40,000
>
> in loans to pay for tuition. I'm a student who came from being homeless, within
>
> 18 months [of] becoming SGA president. So, it was just always me developing.
>
> Then, when I became a professional. I was able to get a job through Legacy
>
> University, and I continued with my master's, and built a connection with people

who were able to mentor me, tell me how to do different things, help me become

a really good PE teacher. And then again, Legacy University, was there for me

when I got promoted to Technology Coordinator. So, Legacy University has

always been a big developing institution for me personally and professionally.

Ace contributed most of his success to his time at Legacy University. He discussed how

the skills he learned were transferable to his job and to the military. Finally, I asked Ace

to provide one characteristic or trait that best described him. He replied with the words

"work ethic."

I think ever since I became homeless, the way I look at things is completely

different. It's always never go back to being homeless. But also, don't waste your

time just doing something. And that's what I try not to do now. Everything I do

now is 100% of what I want to do.

In all, Ace appeared to be a blue-collar SGA president where no job was too low for him

to do based on his interview. He described his leadership style and philosophy as not

being afraid to "get dirty" and nothing was beneath him regarding tasks or assignments.

Kayla

Kayla identified as a 27-year old Black woman from Trinidad and Tobago. She is

a revenue analyst. Kayla attended Hidden Gem University and majored in business

administration. Hidden Gem University is a small four-year private HBCU located in the

southwestern part of the United States. The university has an estimated student

population of 1,500. In addition to SGA, Kayla was an active member in campus

organizations such as Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., the National Association for Black Accountants, the Pre-Alumni Council, and the International Student Association.

Kayla's interview took place on a Saturday morning in the library at Legacy University. The library was completely empty besides the two staff members on the first floor at the check-in desk. Our intentions were to conduct the interview in a small study room, but those plans were altered due to a dysfunctional air conditioning unit. We relocated to a secluded corner on the opposite side of the library that had functioning cool air. When I asked Kayla for one word that described her experience at an HBCU, she replied with the word "transformative."

> I'm originally from Trinidad and Tobago … when I started off … in my freshman year [I] was completely different to the person I graduated as in my senior year. But during my sophomore and junior year, that was when I changed to become so much better. I was more disciplined. I was more involved. And it was at those points [that] I really became a person who wanted to make a difference. That's why I use the word transformative. Because when I first came, I came with the goal of graduating, and getting my education, and leaving. But during my sophomore and junior year, is when I became the person who wasn't only going to graduate but leave an impact—a positive impact on campus.

Kayla spoke about the transformation of her mindset and how she used this to impact the lives of other students. Lastly, I asked Kayla to describe one characteristic or trait that best describes her. She replied with the word "talkative."

I like to talk partly because of my job. I am a revenue analyst right now. And a lot

of what I do is sitting down in front of a computer all day. And a part of me is

trying to figure out what is going to be my next step moving forward in my

career, but also not sitting and not talking to anybody.

Out of all the participants, I perceived Kayla as the most social person based on how she

described her interactions with the students. She also spoke about wanting to reach out

and meet every student at Hidden Gem University to learn more about their story and

how she could assist them with their matriculation.

Riley

Riley identified as a 23-year old Black man from North Carolina. He is a

graduate student in a master's of counseling program. Riley attended Smoketown College

where he majored in social work. Smoketown College is a four-year private HBCU

located in the southeastern part of the United States. The university has an estimated

student population of 1,000. In addition to SGA, Riley was an active member in Kappa

Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., Phi Alpha Honor Society, Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society,

Social Work Action Group, National Association for the Advancement of Colored

People, The Rotary Club, and a peer mentoring group.

Riley's interview took place on a Wednesday afternoon in a small study room at

the library on the campus of Wake Forest University. The library was semi-busy with a

small amount of traffic flowing through. The staff was welcoming and very helpful in

assisting me with locating the room. As an opening question to the interview, I asked

Riley to share one word that described his experience as an HBCU. He replied with the word "rewarding."

> I got so much out of it. Of course, there were a lot of troubles, trials, a lot of sacrifices, but all of it really worked out for me in the end and kind of made me the person I am today. I'm able to adapt to situations quickly. I'm able to communicate more effectively. And just become more resilient as a person because of my HBCU experience.

Through all of Riley's hardships at Smoketown College, he still was able to find the blessing in disguise.

Riley also spoke about how he mastered soft skills which were transferable to his career. When, I asked him to describe one characteristic or trait that best described him, with no surprise, he replied with the word "resilience."

> Whenever trouble comes, trials, discomfort, it's like I know how to adapt to it very quickly; [I] just get back to myself and find an equilibrium. I would say maybe because I come from a family with deep religious convictions. So, just realizing why God is our source, our peace, our joy. So, I mean, I really think all of it kind of stems from my faith. Just being an overall resilient person.

I personally do not understand how Riley made it through his time as an SGA president with his sanity, but resilience is definitely the best word to describe him. I believe his experiences were some of the worst out of all the participants. Through it all, he was able to still have a positive outlook on his experiences and stand firm with his spiritual beliefs.

Flash

Flash identified as a 25-year old Black man from Alabama. He is a middle school teacher. Flash attended Legacy University and majored in physical education. Legacy University is a four-year public HBCU located in the southeastern part of the United States with an estimated student population of 4,500 students. Outside of SGA, Flash was an active member in Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., Golden Ambassadors, Alpha Phi Alpha, Health Physical Education and Recreation Club, Gifted Gardeners, and a student education association.

Flash's interview took place on a Tuesday afternoon at the kitchen table of his home which is shared with roommates. His house was located in a small suburban neighborhood with only one roommate being present in the home. As an opening question to the interview, I asked Flash what was one word that described his experience at an HBCU and he said "cultivating."

I chose the word "cultivating" because when I went to college, specifically Legacy University, I didn't have a clue as to who I was as a person, per se. When I got to Legacy State, I started networking [and] joining organizations. I started meeting people, and I started to change as a person. My outlook on life changed. I looked at college more so as a really good source to network and set yourself up for the next five, ten years, outside of that spectrum. So, it really changed me as a person, you know? It helped me in certain areas, and I really feel as if I've developed and I've changed overall as a total person; so, that's why I chose the word cultivating.

Similar to Kayla and Ace, Flash also spoke to how his time during undergrad changed his outlook on life. He related the lessons he learned to his current career and attributed most of his success to Legacy University. Lastly, I asked Flash to describe one characteristic or trait that best described him. He replied with the words "natural-born leader."

I would say just being a natural-born leader. I've always been a leader, and I guess, coming out of Legacy helped really bring out those leadership qualities. So for me, I would say just being a leader.

In all, Flash was not lacking in the confidence area. He presented himself as a bold leader who knew what it took to lead the student body.

Ashley

Ashley identified as a 34-year old Black woman from South Carolina. She is an admissions counselor and entrepreneur. Ashley attended Uncertainty University where she majored in social science. Uncertainty University is a four-year private HBCU located in the southeastern part of the United States. The university has an estimated student population of 500. Outside of SGA, Ashley was an active in Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc., National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Young Alumni Council, and University Choir.

Ashley's interview took place on a Tuesday evening in the student lounge of her place of employment. The student lounge was completely empty besides the security guards on the outside of the room and at the check-in desk. Ashley recommended this space because it was spacious and the students had departed campus for the day. As an

opening question to the interview, I asked Ashley what was one word that described his experience as an HBCU. She replied with the word "insightful."

> I feel like [the university] gave me the insight I needed on the real world. Like, I think a lot of people really don't understand what it's like to attend an HBCU. Like, you know? Having to experience other schools and then, actually going to an HBCU, we do things different. We do things different. And especially, me working at Georgia Tech. Like, something so simple as a refund check. They get theirs before school is started. Most HBCUs, you're waiting for that refund check by the end or the middle of the school year. Just how they do things and a difference in how they treat their students. You know? Just so many different things. Like, I think it introduced me to the real world a lot faster than I wanted to.

Ashley discussed how she was introduced to the innerworkings of HBCUs and how some things she preferred not to know. I also asked Ashley to describe one characteristic or trait that best describes her. She replied with the word "fighter."

> Man, I'm a fighter. So, when I graduated from [Uncertainty] it was almost like, oh, it's the real world. Like, what do I do? Where do I go? You know? And I think it's something that everybody kind of goes through unless you really have things set in stone. I didn't know what I wanted to do. So, now here I am with this general broad degree in social science. I spent so much of my time with going to law school and then … After doing a year, I realized it's not what I want to do … You know? And then, I became a mom again. I have an amazing seven-year-old. And I really did not know what I wanted to do. So, it was like, that's when you're

introduced that sometimes a bachelors [degree] is not enough. It's not enough.

Like, you have to go on and do other things. So, I kind of went back and forth

with what I wanted to do. It was a lot of times where, you know? My job wasn't

making ends meet. And here I am, a mother, a recent graduate going around and

people telling you, "Hey. Now you have the education, but you don't have the

experience." And I'm just like, "Well, who's going to give it to me?" You know?

Ashley embodied every aspect of a fighter that you can think of. From being a teen mom

to persevering after graduation, Ashley was determined to be successful and nothing

stood in her way.

Lucky 7

Lucky 7 identified as a 29-year old Black man from Pennsylvania. He is a public

relations manager at a small Midwestern university. Lucky 7 attended Great Place

University where he majored in mass communications. Great Place University is a four-

year public HBCU located in the southeastern part of the United States. The university

has an estimated student population of 3,600. Outside of SGA, Lucky 7 was an active

member in Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc., student newspaper school radio station,

intramural football and basketball, and a first-year peer mentoring program.

Lucky 7's interview took place on a Wednesday morning outside on the shore of a

large lake. The weather was warm with a cool breeze flowing throughout the duration of

the interview. The views of the lake along with the weather provide a tranquil

environment for the interview. When I asked Lucky 7 for one word that described his

experience at an HBCU, h replied "eye-opening."

Well, it was eye-opening for me … First off, I [had] never been in the South. My HBCU was in the South, so I'm from the East Coast originally, and just being in the South was eye-opening, just how the culture is. And as far as school-wise, I mean, it was eye-opening because I'm actually a first-generation student, and my reference for college and higher education is just movies and TV shows. It really wasn't from much discussion to older people who've been there, so it was just eye-opening in the sense of I've never been to college, I've never been in the South. I mean, my schools most of the time growing up were predominately black, so that wasn't anything new to me. But, I guess, being around lots of black southerners was new to me because there is a different culture. So, it was just eye-opening.

Lucky 7 referred to the people in the south as being "super-nice" and spoke to how his time at Great Place University expanded his perspective on a lot of issues. Finally, I asked Lucky 7 to describe one characteristic or trait that best describes him. He replied with the word "inquisitive."

I feel like I'm very inquisitive. I feel like it's a pro and it's a con. I feel like I ask all the questions. I ask good questions. I ask devil's advocate questions before I make a decision. I do checks and balances. I look at the probabilities, like all right this is a percent change that I've got of accomplishing this or the percentages are low. I think I'm just that while I ask questions I really think, and one thing I'm proud of is that I'm not a conformist. I mean, of course, in life it's inevitable that some things you have to conform with, but in the general sense, I don't really do what the majority does.

He spoke to his analytical side throughout the interview which directly aligns with his career in journalism and marketing. He talked about being fact-driven and having an eye for details which paid off for him during his tenure as an SGA president.

Ri Ri

Ri Ri identified as a 24-year old Black woman from Ohio. She is an assistant director of employer relations in a career center at a large four-year university. Ri Ri attended Illustrious University and majored in psychology. Illustrious University is a four-year public HBCU in the eastern part of the United States. The university has an estimated student population of 4,000. Outside of SGA, Ri Ri was an active member in campus organizations such as collegiate basketball, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., Alpha Kappa Psi Professional Business Fraternity Inc., and Thurgood Marshall College Fund Ambassador.

Ri Ri's interview took place on a Thursday morning at her place of employment in her office. The space was extremely welcoming as I was met with greetings and smiling faces from her colleagues. Ri Ri provided me with a general tour of the building and her office space. When I asked Ri Ri for one word that described her experience at an HBCU, she said "enlightening."

> It definitely exposed me to things I didn't think I'd be exposed to, and I feel like it was the gateway into a path of the rest of my life. Especially because it was just something that I didn't think I was capable of doing, or I had thought about doing, and I feel like it was kind of thrust upon me. Then I was like, "Okay, I guess I'll take this opportunity," and really, just in hindsight thinking about it, it was the

gateway to the rest of everything else that I was going to do with my collegiate

career onto where I'm at now. It opened the door … just exposure to everything,

to student life and to see how the politics work of students, to faculty, to staff. To

see how HBCU culture is at different universities, especially because mine is

predominately white … very rural, very poor, just being able to see all these

different opportunities and be around all these different people and cultures, and

still be appreciative of my experience.

Ri Ri also underwent a culture shock when she went to college, but she used this to her

benefit. She discussed having to navigate atypical issues while at her HBCU because of

the student demographics.

Finally, I asked Ri Ri to describe one characteristic or trait that best describes her.

She replied with the word "understanding."

Oh. I feel like I'm understanding, and I think sometimes it's a critique that I get

from people that I'm too understanding. We learned about grace a lot in my hired

program, like giving people grace, giving people the ability to comprehend things

and take their time and stuff, and I feel like often I give too much grace to people

because I think, "Well, what if this is their background?" Or, "What if this is

something they haven't been exposed to before?" Which I think is because of that

experience … I feel like even sometimes when I meet people that are just

outwardly racist, I'm like, "Well, maybe it's because they haven't been around

people like us before. Maybe it's because they have bad parents or a bad

community that didn't teach them. Maybe this is our opportunity to teach them

rather than shutting them down right away.

Ri Ri appeared to have a counselor's heart with a forgiving soul. Similar to Lucky 7, Ri

Ri was inquisitive and based all of her knowledge on the ability to seek understanding.

Jourdan Paris Paris

Jourdan Paris identified as a 27-year old Black woman from Louisiana. She is a

full time graduate student in a theology master's program. Jourdan Paris attended St.

Francis University where she majored in English. St. Francis University is a four-year

private HBCU located in the southeastern part of the United States. The university has an

estimated student population of 3,000. Outside of SGA, Jourdan Paris was an active

member in campus organizations such as honor societies, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

Inc., and several service and mentoring organizations.

Jourdan Paris's interview took place on a Tuesday morning in the library on the

campus of St. Francis University. We were able to secure a private study room on the

second floor. The library processed a cultural vibe given the décor and artifacts

throughout the building. As an opening question to the interview, I asked Jourdan Paris

what was one word that described her experience as an HBCU. She replied with the word

"dynamic."

I think dynamic means, at its core, it's something that's evolving. And that's how I

saw my experience. Each year was marked by different things, different events,

different life events of my own, different world changes that we were responding

to as students and as people, as black people, and so the experience just continued

98

to evolve. And for me, it got better, and I learned a lot, and I grew a lot, and my

relationships were strengthened and things like that. So dynamic, for me, just

means … And truly my HBCU experience hasn't stopped, you know what I

mean?

Jourdan Paris Paris' description of her HBCU was similar to some of the other

participants. She believed the HBCU shaped and molded her as a person through the

various life changing events that took place.

As the final part of the introduction question of the interview, I asked Jourdan

Paris Paris to describe one characteristic or trait that best describes her. She replied with

the word "servant leadership."

One of the terms I learned while I was here at St. Francis University was servant

leadership and I still use that term to describe myself to this day because I think

biblically, and as a woman of faith, and as a minister, I think Jesus is a great

example of what servant leadership is, and how to position yourself to serve

people, and that being a place from which you lead, so I think that's still

applicable to what I aspire to do … And then it also very much connects me to my

time here at St. Francis University. We had to take this class called St. Francis

Leads [pseudonym], in order to serve in any leadership capacity on campus. So, to

be a part of SGA or to be, you know, just any leadership capacity you wanted to

serve in you had to take that class, and that was something I learned very

concretely when we were introduced to the literature about servant leadership and

things like that. So, I think that that's a word that I still very much use to describe

myself. That kind of stands out to me as something that has been true, even before

I had the terminology for it, that was true, and then something that I think will

definitely remain.

If servant leadership could have a picture beside it in the dictionary, it would have a

picture of Jourdan Paris Paris. Everything about her interview spoke to one or more traits

of servant leadership which was not surprising given her strong spiritual grounding.

Summary of Participants

In conclusion, there were many commonalities among the participants including

how they described their experiences at an HBCU, how they defined themselves, and

their numerous involvements in other organizations and activities. However, I

particularly appreciated their narratives and differences in their backgrounds and personal

narratives. Their lives leading up to their time as SGA were eye-opening and allowed me

to check my assumptions on how I viewed the traditional Black SGA president at an

HBCU. Everything is not what it appears to be and we, as higher education and student

affairs professionals, must be careful not to stereotype student leaders. In the words of

Ashley, "We are human too." In the following sections of this chapter, I provide in-depth

accounts of how peers, administrators, faculty, staff, and meaningful involvement

influenced the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. To assist with gathering

those experiences, I asked each participant to submit photographs that highlighted their

experiences as Black SGA presidents at HBCUs.

<center>**Peer Influences**</center>

The participants discussed the impact peers had on their experiences in various ways. The emergent themes from this portion of the study were: (a) conflict, (b) developing relationships, and (c) support. First, the participants described conflict as tension that arose in the form of events or interactions with other students whom they deemed as peers. Next, the participants defined developing relationships as the ability to build personal connections with their peers. Lastly, the participants referred to support as physical presence and mental backing provided by their peers.

Conflict

The participants described conflict as negative interactions or events that occurred with their peers. Five of the nine participants submitted photos that illustrated some form of conflict between their peers and themselves. First, Ace submitted a photo (see Figure 3) that was taken right after an argument occurred with him and his executive branch. This argument took place during a football game. He explained the internal conflict that had weighed down on their branch the entire year.

> The argument impacted me in a negative way because I was a blue-collar worker compared to these other people who were smart, intelligent. I'm not going to say not blue collar, but they look at this stuff on a bigger picture. I don't look at stuff on a bigger picture. I look at this stuff as, "Hey, why are we not sitting with the students? If the students getting wet, we should get wet." They were looking at issues as, "Why would I go out there and get wet when I can be up here in this sky box and not get to sit with you and the other 2,000 students?" It was a bad

<center>101</center>

argument because I never, at this point in my career, looked at anything from their point of view. I always looked at everything from my point of view, or what a real G would do at this time. Or, my hoodness would always come out.

Figure 3. Internal conflict.

Ace spoke about how his personal views on being relatable to the student body did not always align with his peers within SGA. He discussed the frustration he faced and how he felt as though his branch came off as "high class" sometimes. Also, Ace spoke to how this conflict hindered his branch from operating at an optimal level which would have allowed them to be more efficient with their time and resources.

Similar to Ace, Flash used a photo to discuss his conflict with a particular cabinet member within his branch. He provided intimate details to how the situation evolved from a romantic affair to a business affair.

There was a problem with me and the Chief of Staff. Of course, when you're with somebody, and y'all break up, things just aren't the same. I just should have

listened to [my team] when they said, "Don't do that." But, you know, I didn't

listen, and that's something that I wish I would have listened on.

Flash discussed the difficulties he faced throughout that year because of the situation and how he regretted not heeding the advice from former student leaders. During this time in the interview, Flash was seemingly upset with himself as if he wished he could go back and change the situation. Flash also found it difficult to work with another peer within his branch. He mentioned how his vice president wanted to take the lead on every project. Flash stated, "I guess he thought it was about him. He wanted to take the lead on a lot of stuff." I attempted to probe to get a better understanding of the root cause of the conflict but was unsuccessful in doing so. Flash believed his tenure as SGA president could have been more successful if he did not have as much internal conflict with his SGA cabinet.

Ri Ri's conflict was also with an SGA member. Her conflict presented itself in the form of a picture of handcuffs. As we proceeded to discuss the photos, Ri Ri noticeably hesitated when it came to a certain set of photos. She referred to these particular photographs as "difficult ones." After some time in the interview, we finally approached the photographs. That is when I was completely caught off guard. Ri Ri presented the photograph of the handcuff (see Figure 4) with tears in her eyes and a cracking voice.

Okay. It's some handcuffs. When I was an SGA I picked my cabinet based off

recommendations, so somebody was like, "Can you let this person into your

cabinet?" I said, "Okay, sure. Whatever." And it was good in the beginning. We

were friends, they were a great person, they were heavily involved within the

school, on the football team, in a fraternity, doing all these different things. And

then it turned into a situation where you're in SGA, you're staying late hours,

you're doing all these different things so you're around certain people a lot. I got

into a situation one day where this person assaulted me and I just didn't know

what to do in that situation. I felt like I had put myself in that situation, I felt like

it was my fault. I talked to somebody else during that time and recognized that he

also did that to another person, and it was like I didn't know what to do. I was 20-

years old, didn't really know who to report that to, didn't know who to tell, didn't

know who to talk to about it. I talked to one of my advisors at the university

during the time, and they were just like, "Oh, I'm so sorry that happened to you."

And now when I look back, as a student affairs professional, I'm like, "Why didn't

you report that for me?"

Figure 4. Handcuffs.

This was a traumatizing experience for Ri Ri. She was visibly upset while discussing the

assault. She went on to discuss how she had to serve the remainder of the year with this

individual being in SGA.

Oh my God, it was so stressful because I thought … I just played it off as like, "Oh, that happened because it was just supposed to happen." And like, "I'm not going to confront you on this. I'm going to act like I'm fine with it. I'm going to act like nothing happened." And it was stressful because I'm still trying to rein in my cabinet, I'm trying to be the person in charge, but this person has power over me. This person is somebody that knows things about me. This is somebody that just is powerful in this state and I just don't like somebody having that power over me, so I think it was very frustrating. I think it just pushed it, honestly, to the back of my head and I didn't deal with it. Then, I left and I finished my SGA presidency in May, and he was still there, and he was still a part of being [in the state]. Then, I graduated in December and I went to my internship, and he was offered an internship at the same location. That's when I had to deal with it and that's when I had to start to seek counseling and deal with things like that. But it was just a very continual thing that I kept pushing off and didn't really talk to anybody about it. I haven't talked to a lot of people about it, just because I don't think they'd get it. I feel like especially at HBCUs there's this culture of hush-hush.

Ri Ri talked as if she could not get away from this individual even after leaving the institution after graduation.

I believe no student should be forced to deal with trauma or assault. This situation illustrated a lack of institutional awareness and control. She also discussed how this particular conflict still impacted her today.

I think it hinders me a little bit because it makes me not want to go back to homecoming. It makes me not want to go on social media sometimes. And I feel like often that was one of those experiences where I didn't want it for my SG presidency.

There were multiple layers within this particular case which could have represented other areas within my data analysis such as the lack of support from her advisors. However, I chose to include it in the peer section because the main portion of the incident occurred between Ri Ri and a peer.

For two participants, Kayla and Jourdan Paris Paris, conflict occurred outside SGA, but within the institution. These conflicts were between the SGA presidents and their student bodies. Kayla discussed her conflict with the student body as a practical disagreement on approaches to resolving an issue at the university. The students wanted to use a particular approach that was not applicable in eyes of Kayla.

They [the student body] wanted to sit outside the campus to protest, sit outside the president's office to protest. And I remember thinking … Well, I didn't know the process of financial aid because I was on scholarship and because I'm international, I don't have access to government funds. So, I had no idea what was the process. I didn't know … I mean, I know what refunds meant, but I didn't know why you get refunds, or how you get refunds, or whatever. I didn't know anything about it. And I remember them wanting to sit out there, and they wanted to make a ruckus, and I didn't agree with that. So, I told them. I was like, "I will speak to whoever I will speak to." And that's when I got the student to be a

representative in the financial aid meetings. But, at that point, I knew … I was

Student Government. And I felt like it was not going to be a good look for me to

be out there protesting in the way they wanted to do it. They wanted to go, and

shout, and whatever. And I just wasn't that person. And I guess part of that was

me being an AKA. And knowing that I wasn't only representing SGA at that

point, I was representing my sorority. And I didn't want it to be known that I was

associated with that or at least present out there.

At first, Kayla found it difficult to resonate with the students on this particular issue

because it was not a part of her experience. She mentioned how it was hard to understand

their side because she was not knowledgeable of the financial aid process. She also had

an internal conflict with her intersecting identities as the SGA president and a member of

a sorority. She found it difficult to separate the two groups and chose to navigate the

situation behind the scenes instead of aligning with the students' interests.

Along the same lines as Kayla's conflict, Jourdan Paris Paris' conflict occurred

between her and another student outside of SGA. Jourdan Paris talked about an emerging

issue regarding equity and the rights of the LGBTQ++ community at HBCUs. She began

by discussing the lack of resources for the LGBTQ++ community and how policies and

procedures do not reflect the needs this community. She presented a picture of the

transgender flag (see Figure 5).

So this is the flag for transgender people. The most challenging experience that I

had as SGA president was with a trans student. Basically, what happened was

there was legislation that was being changed that could have impacted her in a

negative way. At the time, I think as a person, I have grown and become more enlightened with regards to oppression, inequality conversations that don't necessarily deal with my embodied experience such as the LGBTQ community and things of that nature. At the time I was still in a, you know, I was in a different place. So, my ability to see it in the moment was not what it is now. When the legislation went forth, we went through all of the proper channels, but no one pushed back on it or anything like that, so then it was going to vote … So some of the language was trans-antagonistic. And I didn't even have that terminology then. So, she came to me, and we had a relationship, again, that was my big thing. I had given her rides to places and advocated for her, without her even knowing. To people who would misgender her and all this other stuff. So, I felt pretty good about our relationship, so when she came to me, and I thought I was trying to listen, but the situation literally in that moment blew up, to the point where …"What is going on?" Curse words was flying, all kind of things were happening. I was trying to stay as calm as possible because I recognized the optics of the situation as well as I try not to allow people to take me out of character, right? Especially because I'm in such a visible position.

Figure 5. Transgender flag.

Jourdan Paris discussed how it was difficult to relate to the concerns of the student given her embodied experience was different from that of the student's.

This situation ultimately ruined their friendship and the student blocked Jourdan Paris Paris on all social media accounts and has not spoken with Jourdan Paris since this incident. Jourdan Paris attributed this conflict to a lack of understanding about the LGBTQ++ community. She also spoke to how her perspective since this time had evolved with more understanding and the ability to accept other's ideologies and ways of thinking that you might not identify with. I could not help but wonder if Jourdan Paris's faith background that she mentioned in her introduction questions and throughout her interview influenced her ability to resolve this particular issue. Similar to Ri Ri, this incident still impacted Jourdan Paris to this day, and she spoke about wanting to reach out to the student to discuss the incident and apologize for how she handled it.

In sum, most of the participants faced some type of conflict with their peers. I was intrigued to see the variety of conflicts and how they impacted the participants in various ways. The conflict that was presented served as a distraction for the SGA presidents. Some of the leaders spoke of these distractions as mental barriers or physical barriers that stood between them and accomplishing their goals. The next section of this chapter discusses the emergent theme of relationships.

Building Relationships

The next emergent theme was the idea of forming relationships. The participants defined this theme as building life-long connections with their peers. Five of the nine participants discussed the impact of developing relationships with their peers. First, Riley

discussed the importance of having friends and creating those relationships with his peers. He presented a photograph (see Figure 6) of his friends and himself outside of Wednesday assembly.

> Number two [photograph number], because we were friends. So, this reminds me of the good times, like, having those Wednesday assemblies because we were in Christian school, so we would have … It wasn't a chapel, but it was just like on Wednesdays, so I mean the whole school came together. People would dress up. That was our first assembly … We built so many relationships with people, students, that we would have never built.

Figure 6. Wednesday assembly.

Riley spoke passionately about his relationship with his peers and how that relationship kept him grounded to do what he campaigned on.

Comparable to Riley, Lucky 7 spoke to his relationship in two forms. First, he talked about having fun with his peers and being a close family. He presented a photo (see Figure 7) with his friends doing silly poses.

This photo stands out to me because we were just having a good time, taking a silly photo, and I think that makes up that year. We were family. We loved each other. I mean, there were lots of fights or lots of arguments and things like that. But you know how families are. Even though things go down behind closed doors … Through the public you probably wouldn't have known, you know what I mean? Because we kind of held that. We kind of kept what's in the family in the family. When it was time to have a good time, we always had a good time with each other. Of course, there were moments where people didn't get along or whatnot, but, to be honest, I felt like everything there was … What's the word I'm looking for? There was conflict resolution throughout the year.

Figure 7. Silly poses.

Lucky 7 believed their family-like relationships as SGA officials provided them the opportunity to resolve conflict easier. It is important to note that Lucky 7 did not discuss having any type of conflict within his cabinet nor with the student body.

Secondly, Lucky 7 discussed building relationships outside of the campus with other HBCUs.

> A big part of the HBCU culture is during football games, the SGAs would hang out before, network, socialize, talk about what you guys got going on. The issues you guys are dealing with on campus or with administration or bouncing ideas off of each other, tour the campus, eat together, laugh together, argue, or I don't know, beef or whatever, chain each other down. It's part of the HBCU culture for games for SGAs to link up before.

Lucky 7 described the importance and benefits of networking with other HBCUs. He used a picture of his branch visiting the campus of Alabama State University. During this time, SGAs from both institutions connected with one another for a tour, luncheon, and other social events. He eluded to building life-long relationships with other students.

Jourdan Paris Paris also mentioned similar relationships with other HBCU student leaders. She presented a photograph (see Figure 8) with peers from another institution at one of their social events.

> I don't even remember what event this was, but this is Miss Blue and white [pseudonym]. So, she's the young lady who was Miss Blue and white the year that I was SGA president, and the SGA and student leadership at Blue and white University [pseudonym] and the SGA and student leadership at St. Francis

University this particular year—we hung out a lot. So, most of our pictures are at parties and stuff, so just kicking it, hanging out. But, yeah, so this is she and I at a game, this looks like the arena. Why were we there? I don't remember. So, this was just demonstrative of the connections that we built across campuses … But we would support each other at our events, so any big events that we had, they would come to our campus. Any big events that they had ... And like I said, even parties and stuff, we would just party together and hang out. So again, she called me the other day and we were on the phone for two hours. I don't know, just talking about life stuff, so it was about building those connections and bridging the campuses as well as building those friendships and things like that. So, that was a really positive experience. And there are people from Blue and white University who would recognize me as SGA president like, "Oh, yeah." Even the Greek life and things like that, she's an AKA, we would try to support each other in that regard too. So yeah, that was a good year, and definitely some good bonds, and friendships, and relationships were built.

Figure 8. Peers across the street.

Jourdan Paris spoke to her ability to connect across campuses and how those relationships allowed the student leaders to collaborate during events. She also discussed the importance of having the network to process ideas and campus issues.

Jourdan Paris discussed relationships in the form of mentoring as well. She elaborated about how she mentored other students within the student body by presenting a picture (see Figure 9) of herself and her mentees.

> This is one of my line sisters, and then these five young women literally call me mom and I call them my daughters. All of them have graduated from St. Francis at this point … And so this is just representative to me of, like I said, my investment in not just doing what I'm here to do, but in building connections and mentoring and supporting the next generation of leaders as well, and sharing my knowledge. Because it's not about me. It's not about Jourdan Paris. This is not Jourdan Paris's University, it's not about my goals and objectives. It's about what the university has and about us all getting what we are called to get from this experience in our own way.

Figure 9. Mentees.

Jourdan Paris's servant leadership qualities were exemplified during this part of the conversation. She spoke to her passion and desire to connect with undergraduates and give back to them in the form of mentoring. She was extremely proud of their accomplishments and spoke of it from the lens of a proud Black mother. Jourdan Paris referred to this portion of her tenure as meaningful and fulfilling.

Flash talked about his relationships as "positive memories." In particular, he discussed the lasting impact building relationships had on him.

I would say just created great, positive memories to look back on, such as Big Class [pseudonym] and homecoming. The relationships that I built with people [peers] who I didn't know throughout my tenure. The support, and encouragement, and the work that they were ready to do throughout my time, it was just lasting, positive memories.

Flash believed building relationships with peers were vital to his success. He spoke to building those relationships during the summer which turned into fundraising opportunities for his administration so they could pour back into the student body.

Like Flash's beliefs on relationship building, PJ talked about the importance of having relationship with his peers in order to achieve common goals.

As far as working with other campus organization presidents, that was a great experience for me because I gained a lot of good friends. A lot of my lifelong friends are people that were in the same organization as me, or I worked close with their organization. So, I still keep up with them. We're the friends that we go on vacations together and all those type things because we just had similar

interests and similar work ethic. So, I think that was just another great part of

student government is really getting to be able to get to know some of those

people. We are all very different, from different backgrounds, different places, but

we had a lot of the same interests when on campus.

These relationships for PJ are still impactful. He was excited to discuss the relationships

and also grateful to have such wonderful connections with his peers. PJ was intentional

on venturing outside of SGA to development relationships with other student leaders

across campus. He also spoke to the benefits of those relationships when it came time to

take a stand against the current administration.

In sum, relationships were an essential essence to the experiences of the Black

SGA presidents. They spoke about the importance of having a support system throughout

their time as SGA presidents. For the next section, I highlight examples of the emergent

theme support.

Support

The most prominent emergent theme relating to peer influence was support. The

participants highlighted different physical and mental ways in which their peers

supported them throughout their tenure as SGA presidents. Ace detailed how his peers

supported him by singling out one person in a photo (see Figure 10).

As you see, there's Sergeant [pseudonym] in the background. So, Sergeant and D

[pseudonym] were my main two people. They were the only two people that

really could tell me something I asked them. I had given speeches up to this point,

but when I knew alumni was there I went and got a haircut. But I didn't really care

about a haircut. I didn't care about a wardrobe. I was a hoodie type dude. And, we

had a big speech coming up, and of course, I didn't want to get no haircut. And,

Sergeant was like, "Hey, man, just get a haircut, blah, blah, blah … And Sergeant

knew me. Like, there's Hot Rod, and there's Ace. Sergeant know I was in the

hood. Sergeant know I was homeless. When Sergeant was in the dorm I was

broke, so what I would do is Sergeant was in the army. I would compete against

Sergeant at different events, like push-ups or running a mile just to get his food.

Because at this time Sergeant was the one in better shape, blah, blah, blah, but I

could do more sit-ups than you for a ham sandwich. In two weeks, I bet I can do

more push-ups than … I definitely trusted Sergeant. And more importantly, I

knew if Sergeant thought it was stupid or dumb, or didn't make any sense, then

Sergeant would tell me.

Figure 10. Sergeant.

Ace continued to discuss how Sergeant was supportive by holding him accountable. Sergeant also held Ace to the highest standard possible. Ace appreciated this support from Sergeant as his tone and body language always perked up when discussing Sergeant's impact on his tenure.

Ace also discussed how other peers supported him but more so from a collective group of former presidents, his frat, and executive branch.

> I had a supporting cast with my frat. I had a supporting cast with my executive branch. I have my street team to give me the pulse of the school. I had my more seasoned freshmen to give me the pulse of the school. Again, I had other SGA people to test, so I can always shoot them a message without you and King Tut [pseudonym] even knowing, "Hey, Kappa man [pseudonym] what do you think about this?" "Hey, Que [pseudonym], what do you think about this?" And hear their perspective before you even debate.

Ace alluded to the importance of having support when gathering information to plan and to how important it was to have people rally behind him in a time of need.

Somewhat like Ace's support systems, Ri Ri identified a specific person who supported her during her time as SGA president. She identified one of her branch members who would eventually become a close friend.

> J Dog [pseudonym], it's like you hate to even say that you were SGA president when you had somebody else that was there for you as much as you [yourself]. Even though he was the vice-president, he did as much as me. He did everything with me. He'd stay in the office until 10:00 or 11:00 at night with me. We had the

same classes because we were in the same degree. We were both psychology

majors, so we took the same classes together. He would cover for me, I would

cover for him. I feel like he covered for me more. J Dog was my biggest support

system within that cabinet, although each of them provided support, and I felt like

often we worked well together. J Dog provided the most support. He was the

biggest advocate. He came to all the meetings. He also worked a full-time job, 40

plus hours a week.

Ri Ri's idea of support came in the form of advocacy, work ethic, and authenticity. She

mentioned how J Dog understood her as a person and understood what she was going

through. She referred to him as her "ride or die" which meant she could count on him for

anything at any time. The support from J Dog allowed Ri Ri to not feel isolated during

her traumatic year.

Other participants discussed peer support from the lens of collective groups. Flash

mentioned support in reference to peer participation in events and initiatives using a

photograph (see Figure 11).

This [photograph] was during the summer, as well. I had gathered some students

to work the baseball games during the summer, and one thing that I wanted to

implement was starting a scholarship fund through SGA, and this was a way that

we were able to raise money throughout the summer. So, we did about four or

five of these throughout the summer, and they paid like $30 or $40 for each

person who showed up. I felt very accomplished here, because this was something

that was … I felt like it was needed. Our objective was to give four, five, six

scholarships, and I just felt accomplished, and a lot of the students who were

helping were very supportive of this mission. It was fun. We had a great time, and

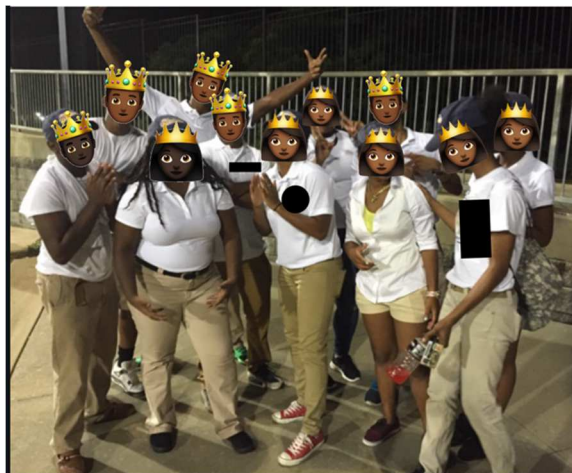we just properly planned it and properly executed it. So, I felt very accomplished

here. I did.

Figure 11. Baseball game.

The support from other students during the summer allowed Flash to feel accomplished.

He mentioned how this idea of support jumpstarted his academic year as SGA president.

       Similar to Flash, Kayla discussed how peer support during campaigning and

throughout the year motivated her to work harder using a photo she provided (see Figure

12).

       It's [photograph] my sorority sisters helping me promote running for president.

And, again, when I was first approached by the past president to run, my first

instinct was to say no. But part of me wanted to say yes because I was already

involved in SGA. When I told my sorority sisters that I was approached to run,

they were definitely the ones that were backing me, encouraging me. They helped

me promote pub any way that they could have helped, they helped I guess, I felt

the support of everybody. And that made me feel encouraged to work harder to

actually become Student Government. As well as during the process of

promoting, I had to think about all the things I wanted to do if I was to win. And

even some of the ridiculous ideas, they were the ones that were like, "No, if that's

what you do, try it. At least try." So, it was encouraging.

Figure 12. Sorors.

Kayla's depiction of support was also motivating to her. Her sorority sisters provided her

with the energy and ideas she implemented during her tenure.

Ashley also talked about her sorority sisters and campaign time and the support

she received.

Man, they [sorority sisters] campaigned more than I did. They campaigned. They

did. So, we did a lot of things leading up. Like, I did a week of, like if you're

going to do it, might as well do it big. So, it was a week of just overall continuous

from having shirts to doing different things. And so, they were my biggest

supporters when it came down to it because they campaigned better than I did.

121

They had it together. They were doing some of everything. Like, they were 100%

supportive!

This was a proud moment during the interview for Ashley. She presented a cheerful

attitude and was smiling from ear to ear. Given her background with little to no support,

Ashley took pride in having her sorority back her in a strong way.

Lastly, Jourdan Paris Paris discussed having support from the student body as a

collective. She often compared her tenure as SGA president to the previous year.

For the most part, people were really supportive. I think the previous

administration … There were some struggles and there were some disconnects

between the student body and the student leadership, as well as the student

leadership and some of the faculty and staff, and so that was why that was so

important to me, was repairing that and bringing it back together. So, they were

very responsive, very receptive. And their opinions are valid as well, but for the

most part, people were very … receptive, and the emotion or the temperature was

very positive among the students. And people were very open, and they had

complaints and things like that. It was like, "Okay. This is what I want to see."

Not, "Y'all suck. Everybody, we're going to impeach y'all."

This notion of support was a win in Jourdan Paris's eyes. Her main objective was to

reconnect with the students by repairing the lines of communication. She spoke to how

receptive and responsive the student body was to her branch. This openness from the

student body allowed her branch to be successful in pushing a variety of initiatives.

Jourdan Paris was extremely appreciative of the student body's support.

In sum, the participants expressed three ways in which peers influenced their experiences as Black SGA presidents. Those emergent themes were conflict, relationships, and support. The next section of this chapter illuminates how adult influences (administrators, faculty, and staff) impacted the experiences of the participants.

Adult Influences (Administrators and Faculty)

The second portion of the findings section discusses how administrators and faculty influenced experiences of the Black SGA presidents during their tenure. Lack of support and support were the two emergent themes. Similar to the peer finding of support, the participants described support as the ability to provide resources and help with various situations regarding their SGA experiences. Conversely, the participants discussed a lack of support as a deficit in resources and a failure of backing during their tenure as SGA presidents.

Lack of Support

Lack of support was a commonality among the participants. This theme presented itself as a major hinderance to the participants in a variety of ways such as a lack of resources and a lack of backing the SGA presidents. Riley had an all-around negative experience with the administration starting with his direct advisor. He mentioned how this dysfunctional relationship impacted his entire tenure.

> We didn't have a great relationship because I felt like as my advisor, you should
>
> always see things from my perspective. I also understand that you're an employee
>
> of the school, so of course you're not going to go against the school, but at least

you could support me and give me the proper resources that I need to get things

done that I need to get done on the platform, and then my vice-president was a

sigma and was kind of trash. I wasn't able to get a lot of things done that I wanted

to. Because everything I wanted to do, I would get pushback.

Riley went on to explain how he believed his advisor purposely went against him and his

executive branch. He described this experience as "bringing out the worst in him" which

led him to be in a constant state of anger. Riley also discussed having a mental

breakdown with his advisor and difficulties with other offices on campus. He used a

photograph of a brick wall (see Figure 13) to symbolize this experience.

With our administration, it's like a brick wall. It was literally like trying to get

something done, [but it] just was not happening … So really, it was like the vice-

president of Student Affairs, all of Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Business

Affairs, every other department, division, with the exception of our president's

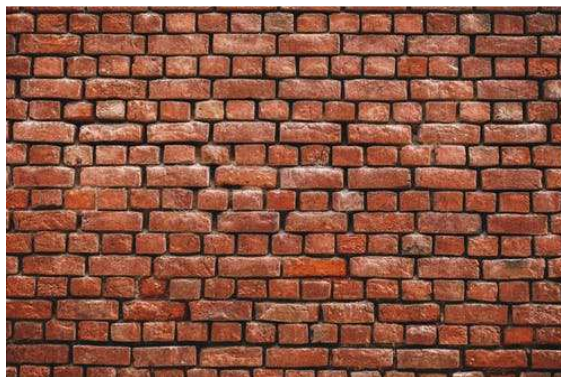office, was really that brick wall for me.

Figure 13. Brick wall.

These occurrences and emotions began to slowly wear on Riley until he reached his boiling point. Riley pointed out an event that took place between his advisor and himself late one night in his advisor's office.

> And it was like with him he just did not understand anything. He did not have empathy, sympathy, or any of it when it came down to students … So with them it was like a brick wall. Just like spending so much time arguing with him over and over. And I remember one time when I went into his office, it was nine o'clock at night. After being influenced by my brothers, and just kind of … this was closer to the end of my term, and I just kind of just spazzed on him. Because I was mad, because everything that I was doing, he was that brick wall stopping me from doing everything that I wanted to do.

Riley's demeanor changed as he discussed this event. He felt as if his advisor had finally gotten the best of him by forcing him to act outside of his character. He asserted over and over that he was not that type of person, but he was driven to a point of no return. Riley explained how he felt dealing with this situation.

> Sometimes it would just be so overwhelming for me, because my friends didn't understand, my vice-president of course was really close with him, so it was like really just me, going against this man, and sometimes it was hurtful. Of course, I never cried about it because I would never let it get to me, like that I had to cry. But it would be some moments where I would sit there and I would just go and flip over the table and just walk away. It's like points of anger that I probably

should have never allowed him to take me to. As if he knew that he was taking me

down the trail of anger.

Riley has been able to deal with these experiences while he is in a master's in counseling

program. He discussed how this program has helped him process and cope with those

emotions even to the point of forgiveness.

Ri Ri's experiences of having a lack of support were tied to her vice president of

student affairs. She believed the lack of support stemmed from her vice president of

student affairs' race and the unwillingness to understand cultural differences. Ri Ri

believed her vice president of student affairs "just didn't care" about the students.

I constantly was in arguments with the VPSA [vice president of student affairs] at

the time, me and her did not get along. I told her that she was not good at her job

and so that was a big thing throughout the relationship, yeah. She was just not the

best fit for that university at all. She was a white woman at[an] HBCU that had

power as a VPSA, so regardless of her race, her abilities were not the best. I met

with her plenty of times, but kept getting no's from her, and I had a lot of issues

with it. [I] feel like she was white and just didn't get it. She didn't try to get it. She

didn't want to get it. And I feel like as a VPSA you cannot be introverted. Yes,

you can be an introverted person, but when you come to work you've got to be

there. You have to come to the student lunches. You have to go to the swearing in

events. You have to get to know people. She was just very awkward; I think a

very much a numbers person. [It was] like dealing with somebody's aunt you

never speak to and you see once a year. It was just really weird. I wanted so much

more from her and I expected so much more from her.

Ri Ri believed the vice president of student affairs was not a good fit. She discussed how

these interactions made it difficult for her and the executive branch to accomplish goals.

She referred to the vice president as lazy, unwelcoming, and lackadaisical when it came

to paperwork.

Flash also had difficulty with his vice president of student affairs. He mentioned

how his vice president did not understand culture of HBCUs. However, he believed this

misunderstanding stemmed from a difference in institutional types.

When I came in, well, that summer they were bringing in Dr. Buckeye

[pseudonym]. She was coming from Ohio State, and Ohio State's one of the

biggest schools in the world. So, you know, I met her during the summer. She

seemed like a very nice individual, but as time went on, she couldn't believe the

amount of power the SGA had. She was coming from PWI to HBCU, so of

course, that's a cultural shock within itself. But, the way SGA operated, in the

past, and how it was operating before she got there, I don't think she could really

handle it. It shocked her, like, 'Y'all just let students just plan events without

going through four or five different channels?' She couldn't deal with it. She just

couldn't … it was a shock for her … to me, she gave the appearance of wanting to

be supportive, but she actually made things hard.

Flash appeared frustrated when discussing his encounters with Dr. Buckeye. He wanted

the students to operate in a way that diminished their power within the university. Flash

also did not appreciate how Dr. Buckeye viewed the students as students and not adults.

Later in the interview, Flash provided some examples of things that Dr. Buckeye did.

> Before she got there, the facility request process was fairly simple. You only
> needed maybe two signatures. When she came in, she changed the entire process,
> and so instead of getting like one or two signatures, it had to go through like four,
> five hoops, so it made it harder for our administration to have events. Also, she
> kind of did away with mixers in the cafe unless it was for a purpose and whatnot,
> and the kids … well, not kids … the students really loved the mixers in the
> cafeteria. You know, I was all for morale. What can we do to keep kids upbeat?
> So, she kind of wanted you to just go along with the shenanigans, basically …
> She was. She was a barrier, yes.

Flash was not pleased with the changes Dr. Buckeye made. The changes occurred

without Flash being a part of the conversations. Ultimately, he referred to Dr. Buckeye as

a barrier to him and the executive branch.

> PJ also had difficulties with some administrators including the university

president. He described interactions with the university president and alluded to the

president and other officials being barriers to his team. The students did not agree with

some of the president's decisions at the time and decided to speak out.

> Now there were some, like I said, with the university president, some of the
> people that work directly under him that just were not very supportive of us due
> to, they didn't agree that we were going against the president. It was hard to work
> with them at times.

128

This lack of support was disheartening to PJ. Yet, he remained steadfast in his efforts and discussed overcoming these barriers. PJ mentioned, "In spite of that, we still were able to get through the issues with them to get things done that we needed to accomplish on campus." This statement showed a sense of resilience PJ and his team had throughout their experiences.

The last participant to discuss a lack of support was Kayla. She briefly talked about the processes within her university when it came to trying to get things done for the students. Kayla stated, "I think just the runaround. You have to talk to one person, and talk to another person, and time to get something processed. It was not … our school was not efficient in getting things approved." She talked about the lack of communication and urgency when it came to dealing with the students. She believed the offices on campus could have operated in a more consistent manner.

In sum, many of the participants believed their experiences would have been easier if they had better support from their administrators. The participants spoke about how struggling to get support from their administrators created hinderances for them trying to accomplish goals. The next section of this chapter discusses support as the second emergent theme.

Support

Support was the second emergent theme regarding how faculty, staff, and administrators influenced the experiences of Black SGA presidents. Support in this context is defined as the providing of resources to enhance (physical and mental) the experiences of the SGA presidents. Support for the participants was manifested in various

forms such as mentors, learning experiences, and motivations. Some participants discussed supports that came from administrators.

PJ began by discussing his support from the vice president of student affairs and various department heads. Again, one of PJ's goals for his tenure was to create collaborative relationships across campus in order to foster support for the student body.

One was our vice president of student affairs. He actually passed away a few years ago … he was a great, great asset to our campus. One of the things that I felt like I was very close to him is because we started at the same time. He had just been hired as vice president of student affairs the summer that I [became] student government president for the first term. So, I was able to really learn a lot from him because he was a very respected man on campus. Everyone that was in the Student Affairs office at that time were great advocates for Student Government. So, I got along with all of those well. A lot of the department heads and deans really worked with us on projects as well. Also, I really had a good experience of working with most of our campus leadership.

PJ held his vice president of student affairs in high regard and with the upmost respect. Given this level of support, PJ and his team were able to accomplish many of their goals throughout his two years as SGA president.

Ashley's support came from a high-level administrator as well. She discussed their interactions with the characteristics of a mother-daughter relationship. This type of relationship appeared with several of the participants and their administrators. Ashley presented a photograph of her mentor (see Figure 14) and stated,

Oh, my gosh. Like, she's amazing because she pushed me. Especially when my
grandmother passed, I wanted to quit. You know? I wanted to drop out. It was
hard. You know? That person that raised you from the time you were born. That
person that you call mom. That person that's there. That person that believed in
you when nobody else did. That person that said, "Hey. I'll raise your kids. You
go to school." You know?

Figure 14. Mentor.

Ashley discussed how pivotal this administrator was for her during a tough time in which
she felt as if she had lost everything. This administrator would eventually become the
university president which helped Ashley's experiences even more. Ashley alluded to
having the opportunity to call the administrator at any time to seek advice, guidance, or
just to talk. Given the administrator's new position as university president, Ashley was
able to get a lot of things accomplished for the student body. This support was key to
Ashley's success as an SGA president.

Support for Lucky 7 came in the form of learning and nurturing. First, Lucky 7
discussed how one administrator challenged him to broaden his perspectives. Prior to

Lucky 7 being elected, the university did not have an office for diversity and inclusion. Lucky 7 discussed the lack of awareness regarding this topic. When asked about people who helped him throughout his time as SGA president, he mentioned his administrator for diversity and inclusion.

> He helped me work on my inclusivity as a leader because as a leader you represent everyone, all types of people from all different types of backgrounds. I do feel like that was an agenda or motive Dr. Diversity [pseudonym] instilled in me was just to be more open-minded because I felt like I was close-minded before that experience. Just to know that people are human no matter what they identify as and who they represent. We all are human. We all have a story. I opened myself up more to that diversity population, not just the black students but all types of students.

Lucky 7 believed Dr. Diversity supported him as a leader by encouraging him to explore new perspectives beyond his current ones. He mentioned how grateful he was that Dr. Diversity came to the university and they crossed paths. Lucky 7 attributed this support to some of his growth as a leader which is still relevant today.

> Lucky 7 also spoke of support in the form of nurturing from his advisor. He presented their relationship and interactions in the form of a close-knit family, even referring to her has a mother figure.

> Yeah, my advisor, she was like my mom. She was my mom on campus. She's still there actually. But that was her second year at Great Place University. She had one year working with SGA before as an advisor, so this was her second year as

SGA advisor. We got along really well. She did curse me out a couple of times, but I needed it. [However], she supported me. She supported us. She had an open door. I literally was probably in her office, if not once a day, at least every other day.

Lucky 7 was proud to talk about his advisor. In doing so, his entire demeanor changed as if he was discussing his biological parents. He spoke to how her support made it easier for his team to plan and accomplish goals. He even mentioned how she supported him beyond SGA. Lucky 7's advisor was no ordinary advisor. She was a mother, counselor, career coach, and life coach.

Similar to Lucky 7, Kayla was fond of her advisor. She discussed how her advisor prepared her and the executive branch for difficulties they might face throughout the year. Kayla said, "We [my advisor and I] got really close. And she was telling me all the things I need to look out for. She prepped me for the experience." This support prepared Kayla to thrive during her tenure. However, this was a short-lived impactful form of support because Kayla's advisor left the university before the start of the academic year.

Lastly, Jourdan Paris Paris had amazing advisors who supported her. Jourdan Paris spoke of her advisors in the essence of investors. From this view, you get out what you put in. Hence, Jourdan Paris believed her advisors were fully invested in her and the team.

I think they were truly invested in us as people and liked us. Because again, these were people who had served on SGA for years before, so they had been developing relationships with them and working on those relationships … [they

133

invested in us] as people. Like these are people, again, and that's them, that's who

they are. These are people who, students from 15 years ago, will come back

looking for them because they were just good people who were invested, who

were invested in the institution and who were invested in students being the best

that they could be, which is why they have been here for 20 years or whatever.

So, they were people who were really invested in us as people.

Jourdan Paris alluded to her advisors going beyond the traditional call of duty which was

to give advice regarding SGA and nothing more. She believed her advisors poured into

them on all levels—personally, professionally, and academically. Jourdan Paris, similar

to the other participants, spoke of her advisors with a cheerful tone. She was proud to

illuminate who they were as people and how they contributed to her success as an SGA

president and a person today.

Outside of administrators' support, Ri Ri and Lucky 7 highlighted their

experiences with faculty members. First, Ri Ri discussed her experiences with a faculty

member she referred to as a mentor whom she could confide in for anything.

I had a really good mentor. Her name was Mrs. TSU [pseudonym] She is the

bomb.com. She went to Tennessee State University. She will not let you forget it.

She is also my sorority sister, so she is also the person that took us to Thurgood

Marshall, so she was just somebody from the beginning where I remember

entering into her first-year experience class. We learned about the university. I

was a basketball player, so she made us come sit up front. But I remember her

locking students out of class because they were late and that really spoke to me.

She is somebody that pushed me to be the best me, but also was this figure that I

had never before. Although I'm very appreciative of my parents, I had never been

around that many black women. She was one of the first black woman leaders that

had been in my life, stood very all, very direct with you but also cared about you.

This individual had a powerful impact on Ri Ri as a Black woman. She discussed how it

was often difficult to balance her role as a Black woman with her role as the SGA

president. However, Mrs. TSU helped Ri Ri navigate these experiences.

If something was wrong, or she felt like the university wasn't taking care of us,

she would go speak to the president directly. She was not my advisor. She was

this professor that I turned into a mentor and so many other things. It's a small

school, I think 3000 students, so she was in charge of everything. But I think in

SGA she pushed me to do things that I didn't think I was capable of doing, and

maybe used my voice. So I would just stop by her office sometimes, cry, sad,

happy, laugh.

Not only was Mrs. TSU a confidante for Ri Ri; she was also an advocate for her and the

SGA team. It's important to note, Mrs. TSU was not the official advisor for SGA. Yet,

she was mentioned as doing the work. This relationship with Mrs. TSU was rewarding

for Ri Ri and it showed with her facial expressions and excitement when discussing her.

Lastly, Lucky 7 described another form of support which came from two faculty

members. First, he discussed his relationship with his advisor who was also a faculty

member. Typically, faculty SGA advisors are administrators within the office of student

life. However, some HBCUs allow the student leaders to choose their advisors as long as they are full time employees.

> She was an advisor. If I needed advice, if I needed to talk to her about an issue within the SGA or an issue on campus she would support me, and she would give me advice on let's look at it from this way. She was definitely a good person to be around. She looked out for me. Yeah, she kind of gave us freedom. I guess with her being so new to campus, she really didn't have task[s] for us. I mean, obviously there were tasks, but it wasn't like nothing too hard. Everything that she gave us to do was something obtainable. We just had to follow through with it, you know what I mean?

Lucky 7 referred to his advisor as a holistic advisor, like some of the other participants. He mentioned how their conversations were not limited to SGA issues. This type of support made it easier for Lucky 7 to navigate certain issue and problems that arose on campus.

> Lucky 7 also spoke of two other faculty members who poured into him academically and personally. He told a story of how one of his professors served as an unofficial counselor.

> Dr. Phil [pseudonym], I was close with him. He was a master of communications professor. Honestly, I don't think I had any of his classes my senior year, but I remember being in his classes the first three years. We had a good relationship, and I would just like to sit in his office. I guess that was a part of my mental health. He's kind of like a quote unquote therapist. I'd just sit in his office and just

talk, and we would talk about anything. We'd talk about real life. We'd talk about what's going on entertainment wise. We'd talk about SGA presidency. We'd talk about what was going on campus.

This professor provided Lucky 7 with an outlet from SGA. Lucky 7 spoke to how Dr. Phil supported him with his mental health by allowing him to be a normal student in his office and not the SGA president.

Lucky 7 also mentioned another professor who assisted him professionally. He referred to this individual as someone who poured into him professionally as a journalist.

There was another guy named Curtis who helped me out a lot as far as just with video skills, with my reporting skills. So, I had a great relationship with the faculty. Actually, it was probably comparable to a division one student athlete at Clemson as far as classes, as far as homework assignments. It was very political. It was political to the point that because I was in a role I was able to take advantage of situations that if I wasn't in that role I wouldn't have. It was kind of like a class thing. Yes, that's probably not fair, but I used it to my advantage.

Lucky 7 believed he was afforded certain privileges and support due to his role as SGA president. However, he took advantage of the opportunities and support from this faculty member and sharpened his skills as a journalist which led him to pursing a master's degree from a top ranked university.

In conclusion, lack of support and actual support were the two emergent themes regarding how faculty, staff, and administrators influenced the experiences of Black SGA presidents. Unfortunately, the participants did not speak of any influential staff

experiences. That could have been due to my lack of clarity regarding who is classified as a staff versus administrators or staff simply was not a part of their experiences. Regardless, some administrators did not support the SGA presidents, which led to barriers during their tenure while others supported them. This allowed the presidents to grow as leaders and achieve their goals throughout their tenure. The next section of this chapter discusses the findings relating to how meaningful involvement influenced the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs.

Meaningful Involvement

The final portion of this chapter discusses how meaningful involvement influenced the experiences of the Black SGA presidents during their tenure. Three themes emerged from the data: (a) sense of accomplishment, (b) inspiration, and (c) relationship building. I discuss each theme in the proceeding sections. The participants began by describing a sense of accomplishment. They defined this theme as a feeling of achievement or a proud moment. Next, they defined inspiration as a feeling of motivation. Lastly, they alluded to their experiences with meaningful involvement as opportunities to expand their networks with various individuals.

Sense of Accomplishment

The participants spoke of having a sense of accomplishment after various events, activities, and occurrences throughout their time as SGA president. This feeling came with descriptions of happiness, achievement, and relief. PJ was one of the first participants to discuss this phenomena. Through his collaborative approach, PJ shared one of his proudest moments as SGA president.

[In]1961, there was a group of students on campus that protested against the civil rights movement because the Georgia [pseudonym] civil rights movement is a very rich movement that a lot of people don't know about. I actually did not know about it until I got there, but there was a group of 31 students that protested against the things that were going on in the city of Movers [pseudonym]. So, at that time, the Chancellor of the University System pressured the president to expel these students, or even possibly his job could be put in jeopardy. So, 31 students including Miss Georgia University at that time were suspended, but what was really important is that the Student Government Association, the campus leadership, and a whole lot of other people, all worked together to petition the Board of Regents of the University System to grant honorary degrees to these students that were expelled. That would be a great memorable moment for me because that was history making. It was just a proud moment to see those students who were once expelled from the university that they chose to go to and had to end up going on to other places, to now come back and get an honorary degree and be officially recognized as alumni of the university.

PJ smiled as he retold this experience and his feelings of being delighted and honored. Yet, what I admired most about PJ was his desire to achieve for others and not for himself. He elaborated more about being happy for them than for himself. This moment was the peak of his presidency as he believed this accomplishment would cement his legacy as an SGA president of Georgia University.

Along similar lines, Lucky 7's sense of accomplishment was connected to a particular event. Lucky 7 shared a photograph (see Figure 15) that took place during homecoming week. We conversed about the importance of programming and how vital homecoming weeks are at HBCUs. Most of the planning for these events fall in the hands of SGA. Lucky 7 stated,

> This is during the coronation of Miss Great Place University [pseudonym] and we had a dance. It was a beautiful moment because the queen at the time, she was very beautiful in her dress as Miss Great Place University. Great Place University is set up where the SGA president was the quote unquote Mr. Great Place University as well. So, that was a big part of my presidency, is just being representation of Great Place University. Being that man figure to be an example of how to carry yourself to other students. I just enjoyed the moment because I felt like it was a moment where you knew that you were the SGA president or quote unquote Mr. Great Place University and that the spotlight was on you, even though I didn't do what I did for the spotlight. In that moment I was like I'm here. I'm really in this position. I'm here to create change and help the school, help the student body.

Figure 15. Rocking the mic.

For Lucky 7, this was his "ah ha" moment. He finally realized the power he possessed to implement change. He mentioned this being the moment that he accepted his position and officially challenged himself to create changes within the university. Lucky 7 embraced this sense of accomplishment and used it as fuel to lead the student body.

Kayla's sense of accomplishment was also associated with a particular program. Prior to discussing the moment, Kayla provided some context about the student morale on campus. She mentioned how some students did not take pride in their university because it was known as a second chance school. Her goal for the year was to get students to increase their self-esteem and pride in the school. Kayla shared,

And I think the most impactful program was on Thursday, where we brought alumni who were already successful, to come back and talk to these students. Because they also had like this kind of mentality where Hidden Gem University [pseudonym] wasn't a highly reputable school. So, a lot of these students were feeling like, "Well, my degree is not that valuable anyway because this school is not highly ranked, nor is it well-known." So, we had alumni come in and talk to

141

these students about how they used their degree to become successful in whatever

area they were successful in. And how without their degree it would not have

made them as powerful as they are.

She was elated to share this experience. Kayla discussed how receptive students were and

how surprised she was when students began to change their outlook on themselves and

the campus. This moment was a high point for Kayla similar to the participants

mentioned in the previous paragraphs. Kayla was able to use her sense of

accomplishment from this event to plan other events which had similar goals.

Flash's sense of accomplishment came with two different events. He described

the first event as one of the greatest times he had during his tenure. He talked about being

at the largest HBCU football classic in the nation and participating in a weekend of

festivities. Using a picture from the classic parade (see Figure 16), Flash stated,

This was [at] a Classic parade. I think I was in a Corvette or a drop-top Mercedes,

but I just felt … at this point, this was before the whole homecoming catastrophe.

I just felt superior. I felt great. I was like, "Man! This is my school. I'm here

representing." I was just happy, and I felt like I was doing such a … I just felt like

"that guy." I just felt like I was on top at this point, you know? that experience,

the parade. At this moment, I felt like, "Man! Can't nobody touch me!" That's how

I felt at this very moment.

Figure 16. On top of the world.

According to Flash's statements, he felt like he was on top of the world. His body and

language changed drastically while describing this experience. To him, this was

definitely a sense of accomplishment and the pinnacle of his term. He went on to discuss

the same feeling during his inauguration. Using a picture of his family (see Figure 17),

Flash stated,

> This was the night after inauguration. My family has always been my major
>
> support system, and I just felt very proud, as somebody who graduated from
>
> Country High School [pseudonym], with a graduating class of 50 students, was
>
> able to go to Legacy University [pseudonym] and become SGA President. I was
>
> just very, very proud to have my family there, and this was a very proud moment
>
> for me. I was just excited, elated, and I knew that my Mom, Dad, brother, and
>
> sister were very proud of me for what I had accomplished. Just a very proud
>
> moment for me.

Figure 17. Family.

To Flash, his sense of accomplishment was tied to making others proud and being a representative for others. He spoke of family in the essence of being supportive and a value to him. So, making his parents proud and setting the example for his younger siblings were a major accomplishment and confidence boost for him.

The last participant to discuss a sense of accomplishment was Ri Ri. Her experience was attached to her college's homecoming festivities. She also used a photograph (see Figure 18) to highlight her experience.

Homecoming, during my SGA presidency was fun because I got to be involved in so many more things and speak at so many more events, go shopping and show up to stuff. It was just very fun. My family came, so there's a picture of my brother in here. This is picture nine. I really just had a great time. This is one of the biggest highlights of my SGA presidency, because I got to speak to alumni, and current students, and family and just take in all of this happiness to show me really why I wanted to do this in the first place.
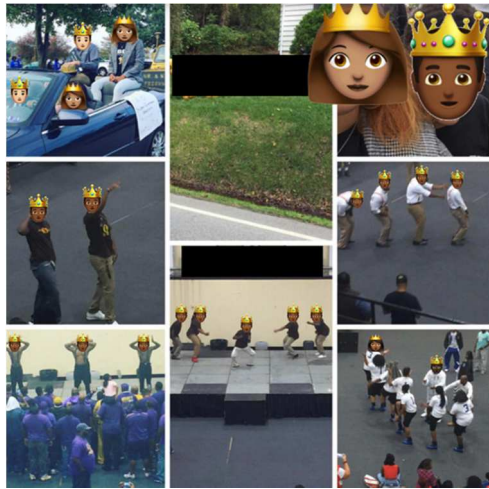
Figure 18. Good times.

Similar to the other participants, this experience was one of the highlights of Ri Ri's

presidency. She described this experience as an opportunity to let her guard down and

have fun. What is interesting about this experience was her ability to share it with her

family. Her sense of accomplishment came in the form of having fun and being able to

relax with people she cared about.

Similarly, Ace's sense of accomplishment included his family. He discussed

inauguration night and presented a photograph (see Figure 19) which captured the events

of that night.

It ended up being a great night for me, because it was one of those nights where

you can tell my mom was really proud of me for a change. It wasn't that proud,

like your child proud. It wasn't that proud like, "Oh, my child scored two points

today, and already lost the game. He had 10 points." It's like, "Okay, he's got 10

points, but he's not good." They were proud like, "Man, you finally got yourself

145

together." That was a big night for me … And for me, and my dad was happy and proud, and that was a big day for me.

Figure 19. Inauguration.

Ace's sense of accomplishment was not for him but for his parents. He was proud to show them the man he had come to be despite his background. Ace spoke to this moment as a time of approval from his parents. He talked about his desire to always make them proud and to make their sacrifices worthwhile.

Overall, participants expressed having a sense of accomplishment in multiple ways. Some participants felt accomplished after taking office while the others felt accomplished during their tenure. The next section of this chapter highlights details regarding the emergent theme inspiration.

Inspiration

The second emergent theme regarding how meaningful involvement influenced the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs was inspiration. The participants

expressed how various occurrences and events motivated and energized them. The first participant who discussed being inspired was Ace. He shared details about a conference he attended in Orlando, Florida.

> I went to that conference, and that conference really did help us. The reality is that we [did] not have a five-hour meeting; it was seven hours. And instead of having one person there, we had four … We were able to sit down, and a lot of stuff that they taught us about navigating through politics, which was crazy because that's what my administration had to do. They talked about us doing the things that people don't want to do, like going to all the boring committee meetings, because most of the decisions are made at the initial committee meeting … The other thing they taught us is, I learned from you guys to be on a street team, but they taught me how to build interns around me.

Ace gained insight at the conference and used that information throughout the year. At first, Ace mentioned being hesitant about attending the conference because no previous SGA branch had attended this particular conference before. However, after attending the conference Ace realized it was a great decision and used inspiration from the conference to implement new initiatives on campus.

Ri Ri also related her inspiration to a conference. She provided a rationale for training student leaders. She believed all student leaders should go through some type of training in order to prepare them for the difficulties that lie ahead. Ri Ri attended a conference that was tailored specifically for HBCUs. She stated,

I remember walking into those conferences and seeing schools like FAM,

Howard, and other schools. They would just come in all matched. They all have

on the same suit, the same scarf, the same shoes and that just blew my mind to see

that Black excellence coming in together. But also, the power and leadership

behind it. I was like, "I want to be the same way." Even though I'm an SGA

president I know that I can be better than I am now, and I want to be just like

them. Not the way that they dress, but it's just the way they carry themselves.

Those opportunities, seeing experiential learning at those opportunities because

employers would come. Meeting other people from other HBCUs that I'm still

friends with today, it's just very … It was like just those experiences themselves

I'm so grateful for, not only because they were paid for, but because it also took

me to places to meet these other people.

Ri Ri was inspired by the "Black excellence" atmosphere. She spoke vividly about their

attire, posture, and elegance. She was inspired to develop a mindset of constant

improvement. Ri Ri used the inspiration from the conference to set the standard for her

executive branch at her home institution.

Similar to Ri Ri and Ace, Kayla also spoke to being inspired by a conference. She

attended the Student Leadership Institute which is a conference for student leaders at

HBCUs.

We had NASAP, which I told you about. It's a … I remember leaving that

conference feeling like I could change the world. I remember that for sure. That

was inspirational … We all want students to do better. But the solutions that each

campus did was different. And it gave you the chance to hear what another

campus did that was successful that you could probably try on your campus. So

many more ideas as to how I could implement something the following year, as

well as school spirit. I already liked my school, or I could even say I love my

school. I love my campus. But it was nice seeing so many other people feel the

same way about their campus. And it gave me a different appreciation for it. As

well as just being around so many people that were smart, that energy, you just

feel like, "Okay, I need to step my game up too." It was just an environment

where everybody was growing. Everybody was trying to do better. Everybody

wanted to impact their campus. So, being around like-minded people with a goal

to positively change something was also a good part about going to NASAP.

Kayla was inspired by her colleagues at other HBCUs. She discussed bouncing ideas off

of other leaders while gathering feedback on what could work and what would not work.

This was the spark during Kayla's tenure as she used this energy and time to plan her

approach to changes on campus.

Lastly, Lucky 7 spoke of his inspiration by way of a private event that took place

in Washington D.C. He explained how members of his team were invited to the opening

ceremony for the unveiling of the Martin Luther King Jr. monument.

We were at the unveiling of … the Martin Luther King monument in Washington,

D.C. We went to the grand opening [and] the grand opening of the unveiling of

the Martin Luther King monument in 2011, and that was probably one of the … It

was a great experience for me because that was an opportunity that kind of came

149

out of the blue for us to go, and we jumped on it. Just to be in that atmosphere and that environment to hear. It was some top-notch black leaders, top-notch politicians, or activists there at the unveiling … Just to be in that atmosphere was, I guess, eye-opening. It was inspiring because Martin Luther King was definitely an important piece … He's an important piece of history, of American history, of Black history, Civil Rights history.

Lucky 7 alluded to this experience as one of his best experiences as SGA president. He also spoke about the environment and people who were at the events. His fondest takeaway was being surrounded by "top-notch Black leaders." He spoke to how this exposure inspired him to do the same for students back at his university. He desired to expose students to a similar atmosphere by bringing in speakers of such caliber.

To conclude, various types of meaningful involvement had an influence on the SGA presidents. They spoke to being inspired in a variety of ways, but they all had a use for their inspiration. They desired to use their inspiration to implement change on their respective campuses. The next section of this chapter discusses the emergent theme relationships.

Developing Relationships

Developing relationships was the final theme related to how meaningful involvement influenced the experiences of Black SGAs at HBCUs. This theme signified the creation of networks and bonds as a result of programs, events, and conferences. Lucky 7 spoke to the importance of networking while attending conferences. Lucky 7

shared a photograph of his executive branch visiting another HBCU's SGA branch.

While looking at a photo of a group of people (see Figure 20), Lucky 7 explained,

> This is an example of the power of networking and following through because a
> lot of times you network with people and you don't follow through. You'll get a
> business card or you'll get a number and [there are] a lot of people I haven't
> followed through with. But I think you guys at ASU there was a connection. I
> think there was a real connection, because I feel like sometimes when you come
> across the HBCU you can tell some people you get vibes from, like it probably
> won't connect or you all won't fit or whatever.

Figure 20. HBCU homies.

Lucky 7 was referencing meeting other SGA groups at the Student Leadership Institute, a

conference for student leaders who attend HBCUs. He was adamant about the power of

networking and building authentic relationships which provided resources to their team

throughout the year. He further alluded to staying connected to those student leaders

seven years later. Lucky 7's perspective on building relationships moved outside of their

campus gates.

Riley's outlook on developing relationships came from a program he facilitated. He believed in creating an environment that supported vulnerabilities. He mentioned his desire for his team to be one with one another but that could only come if they truly understood and respected each other.

> I facilitated a program and my colleagues really kind of shared some of their deepest feelings. And that really used us to draw closer together. And we had a really good time, even though my school again messed up and put us in a janky apartment complex for our leadership conference, but it really turned around for our good, and we really had a good time.

Riley spoke of this workshop as a time in which his team members were able to let their guards down and build rapport with one another. Riley projected the year would be filled with trials and tribulations, so he wanted to ensure everyone was on the same team and supported one another. Their ability to form relationships made the trial easier as the year progressed.

Similar to Riley, Jourdan Paris Paris discussed building relationships through facilitating workshops. She explained that each year SGA would host a series of trainings prior to the start of the new academic year. The purpose of these trainings was to equip the student leaders with tools to successfully perform their duties. As a result of the training, Jourdan Paris believed the team grew closer.

> It was the first opportunity that we really had to work together. The summer prior, one of the things I was very adamant … about throughout our whole time was us meeting regularly like, "Come hell or high water, we need to meet." So, over the

summer we were doing Skype meetings, and there were different tasks that I had,

kind of set some guidelines for and like, "You need to turn this in at this time.

You need to let me know what you need for this at this time what have you." But

this was the first time that we were in person, all working together … So a couple

of them were my line sisters, so we had worked together on some things before,

but this was our first time working in this capacity for these goals or what have

you, so it definitely brought us closer together. It definitely allowed us to see

some of our strengths and things like that in the moment, and just develop trust,

which I think was really crucial throughout the year, like I know that you're going

to get this done. So, yeah.

Jourdan Paris was proud of the leadership training. Throughout the interview, she

constantly referred to her team's ability to effectively communicate with one another.

This communication efficacy was her top priority for that academic year. Jourdan Paris

believed their ability to communicate was related to their ability to develop relationships

with each other and their constituents.

Overall, participants discussed how developing relationships impacted their teams

in respective ways. Some of those impacts were at the SGA level, the local campus level,

and beyond their campus. However, each participant discussed the benefits of building

relationships.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented findings on how peers, administrators, faculty, staff, and

meaningful involvement influenced the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs.

I identified emergent themes based on the leadership identity development model which guided my research questions. First, I presented the emergent themes related to peer influences: (a) conflict, (b) developing relationships, and (c) support. The Black SGA presidents explained conflict as negative tensions and interactions with peers. Next, the participants outlined developing relationships as building bonds and connections with their peers. Lastly, the participants referred to peer support as physical presence encouragement from peers provided throughout their tenure as SGA presidents.

Secondly, I found two emergent themes related to administrators, faculty, and staff: support and lack of support. The participants defined support as the ability to provide resources and tools to assist with various situations regarding their SGA experiences Next, the participants discussed lack of support as having access to necessary tools and resources to be successful.

Lastly, I identified sense of accomplishment, inspiration, and relationship building as emergent themes regarding meaningful involvement. The participants spoke about sense of accomplishment as a proud moment related to reaching a goal. Next, they defined inspiration as a feeling of motivation. Lastly, they alluded to their experiences with meaningful involvement as opportunities to expand their networks by building connections with various individuals. In Chapter Five, I elaborate on how the findings are connected to the literature review and provide implications for practice and future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black Student Government (SGA) presidents at Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCU) to understand how peer, administrators, faculty, staff, and meaningful involvement influenced their experiences. The research questions for this study were:

1. How do Black SGA presidents at HBCUs make meaning of their experiences?

2. How do administrators, faculty, staff, peers, and meaningful involvement influence the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs?

This study was grounded using student involvement theory (Astin, 1984) and the leadership identity development model (Komives et al., 2006). I employed a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology (Patterson & Williams, 2002; van Manen, 1990) which allowed me to interpret the participants' lived experiences of being a Black SGA president at an HBCU. This study consisted on nine participants from eight HBCUs. To collect data, I utilized photo-elicitation interviews. The participants submitted photos that highlighted their experiences. Those photos were then inserted into a semi-structured interview which lasted 60-90 minutes. I used hermeneutic thematic analysis to make meaning of the participants' experiences as Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. In this chapter, I provide a summary of the research findings, discuss the connection of the findings to the current body of literature, provide implications for future practice, and provide implications for future research.

Summary of Research Findings

For this study, I examined how peers, administrators, faculty, staff, and meaningful involvement influenced the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. The purpose of my study was to understand the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. I presented the findings as emergent themes related to each component of the research question.

First, I identified how peers influenced the experiences of Black SGA presidents. I identified three prominent findings participants discussed during their interviews: conflict, developing relationships, and support. The participants vocalized conflict as unwarranted interactions between colleagues, constituents, and or friends. These tensions had a negative impact on the participants both mentally and physically. Next, the participants discussed the importance of building relationships with their friends. They alluded to this theme as creating life-long connections and friendships. Lastly, the participants spoke to the idea of having support. They expressed this finding in a variety of ways such as vocal support, financial support, or physical presence. Support had a positive impact on the participants which provided them with motivation and encouragement.

The next portion of the findings were based on how administrators, faculty, and staff influenced the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. I identified two emergent themes for this section: lack of support and support. The participants expressed lack of support as hinderances to their success as presidents. These hinderances manifested themselves as a lack of resources, guidance, and backing for certain goals or

initiatives. This theme negatively impacted the experiences of the participants by forcing them to overcome unnecessary barriers. Next, the participants expressed having overwhelming support from some faculty and administrators. This finding was presented as the ability to offer needed resources, guidance, and motivation that enhanced the experiences of the Black SGA presidents. This theme was highlighted as providing financial resources, career advice, conflict resolution, and empowerment.

The final portion of my study considered the role of meaningful involvement in the experiences of Black SGA presidents. The participants articulated three emergent themes: sense of accomplishment, inspiration, and relationships. First, the participants discussed feeling a sense of accomplishment at various events and programs. They alluded to this feeling as prideful moments of achievements. Next, the Black SGA presidents spoke of being inspired. They discussed how the events and occurrences motivated and energized them to work harder for the students and achieve their goals. Lastly, the participants spoke about having an opportunity to building connections via campus events, conferences, and programs. They addressed the gratitude of being in certain spaces and having opportunities to expand their personal and professional networks. Overall, peer, administrators, faculty, staff, and meaningful involvement influenced the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs in positive and negative ways. Within the next portion of this chapter, I discuss the relationship between the findings and the current body of literature.

Discussion of Findings

This findings from this study expand the existing body of literature on Black SGA presidents at HBCUs in two major ways. First, I highlight the voices of a marginalized group of Black students who are almost nonexistent in the current body of literature. The findings are presented with visual representations of the lived experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCU. Second, my findings move beyond traditional examinations of outcomes related to Black student involvement. My findings highlight the actual lived experiences which provided a richer explanation to the outcomes related to those experiences. These findings will allow researchers and practitioners to understand how lived experiences shape student outcomes.

Within this section, I connect my findings to the current body of literature, outlined in Chapter Two. I use the developmental influences concept from the leadership identity model (Komives, 2005) to organize my thoughts. Also, I discuss the connection of my findings to Kuh (1994) as he identified the outcomes of participating in SGA. My study adds to the literature about Black student involvement, specifically SGAs at HBCUs. I hope to highlight the experiences of the Black SGA presidents while calling for more in-depth research on Black student involvement at HBCUs. Lastly, I provide recommendations for improving the practices of advising among faculty and administrators.

Peer Influences

Previous research defined peer influences as individuals who provide affirmation and recognition or someone of similar statue who is viewed as a role model, sponsor, or

mentor (Komives et al., 2005). Moving one step further, peers also have the capacity to exhibit influential or positional power which might not present itself in a positive manner (Komives et al., 2006). For my study, the participants referred to peers as their classmates, colleagues, or students from other universities. The peer influences highlighted in the findings of this study impacted the Black SGA presidents in both positive and negative ways which adds to the original work of Komives et al. (2006). The peers exhibited the capacity to affirm as well hinder using positional power. My findings partially reinforce the definition of peer influences as described by Komives et al. (2006). Below I provide clear examples of how peer influences impacted the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs.

I concluded not all peer influences foster positive outcomes. One of the issues I take with the current body of literature is this broad assumption that Black student involvement promotes only positive outcomes. The participants expressed commonalities relating to engaging in conflict which led to mental and physical harm. For example, Ri Ri discussed being sexual assaulted while Ace discussed having difficulty relating to his peer colleagues. This finding refutes the beliefs regarding positive outcomes. Unfortunately, the current body of literature does not examine many negative aspects of student involvement outside of looking at a decrease in grade point averages or negative relationships with faculty members (Baker, 2008; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). Thus, this finding is not currently supported in the existing body of literature due a to lack of holistic examinations. More research needs to be conducted to examine the negative peer

experiences relating to Black student involvement. The next two themes related to peer influences were supported in the literature.

For the second emergent theme, I discovered peers influenced the participants in building relationships. Similar to the findings of Kuh (1994), the participants presented outcomes in social competence. Kuh (1994) defined social competence as the capacity for intimacy, working with others, teamwork, and dealing with others. My finding of building relationships supports Kuh (1994) and Guiffrida's (2003) assertion that participating in SGA and student organizations helps students develop social competence and building relationships. The participants spoke to this assertion by discussing their ability to expand their networks and the importance of working as a team. The participants also expressed their development of altruism which Kuh (1994) defined as interest in the well-being of others, empathy, and respect for peers. The participants discussed the importance of understanding the issues of the student body by building those connections. Furthering that idea, my findings also support the findings of Flowers (2004). He found peers influenced personal and social development for students. In sum, my findings of building relationships support the existing body of literature.

The final peer influence theme was the feeling of support. This finding directly impacted the Black SGA presidents and indirectly fostered positive outcomes such as self-awareness, social competence, confidence, self-worth, altruism, reflective thought, and practical competence (Kuh, 1994). For example, one participant discussed how his peers supported him by holding him accountable. This idea of accountably led Ace to become more self-aware of his beliefs and actions while increasing his confidence.

Another example would be Kayla and Ri Ri's discussion of support. They explained how the support from their friends and sorors influenced their confidence and self-worth. Lastly, Jourdan Paris elaborated on her support from the student body. She explained how that support influenced her ability to empathize, see different view-points, and make decisions for the student body. Those outcomes are described in Kuh (1994) as altruism, reflective thought, and practical competence.

In summary, the participants of this study were able to build relationships and assemble support from their peers which led to positive outcomes for the Black SGA presidents. These findings support previous studies regarding outcomes associated with participating in SGA (Flowers, 2004; Kuh & Lund, 1994). However, I was unable to support the theme of conflict due to a gap in the literature regarding hinderances associated with participating in student government. The next section focuses on the influences of faculty, staff, and administrators and its relation to the current body of literature.

Faculty, Staff, and Administrator Influences (Adult Influences)

Researchers defined adult influences as adults who provide affirmation, recognition, and attributions of leadership (Komives et al., 2006). Students or young adults often view these adults as mentors or role models who possess influential power or have positional power within a given structure. Specifically related to my study, adult influences refer to faculty, staff, and administrators. The participants highlighted two juxtaposed themes relating to how adult influences impacted their experiences: lack of support and support.

To begin, the participants expressed a lack of support from their administrators. This finding is similar to Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) and Strayhorn and Sandler (2009) in that their participants reported a lack of productive relationships with faculty members. The authors of those studies concluded a lack of support led to isolation and disengagement. Both of those outcomes were illuminated within my findings. However, the participants discussed their lack of support when dealing with administrators rather than faculty members. The Black SGA presidents eventually became disengaged with the administrators which led them to a feeling of isolation.

Lastly, this finding supports the findings of Kuh (1994) because the participants like Riley and Ri Ri expressed gains in self-awareness, autonomy, and reflective thought as a result of not having support. Riley and Ri Ri were able to become self-directed while reflecting and learning from their previous experiences. Although Kuh (1994) presented outcomes as a result of positive interactions, this finding of lack of support provides an alternative perspective showing that positive gains can occur within negative experiences. Fortunately, this finding was not the case for all participants.

The second finding related to adult influences was support. The participants discussed various forms of support from faculty and administrators. These forms of support were manifested via physical and mental resources. The participants spoke of being empowered, motivated, and having learning opportunities as a result of having support. As seen in the literature, students reported gains in personal, social, and learning outcomes as a result of positive student-faculty interactions (Sheshane et al., 2012; Strayhorn, 2008; Strayhorn & Sandler, 2009). The students also exhibited an increase in

autonomy, confidence, reflective thought, and vocational competence as outlined in Kuh (1994). The literature supports my findings related to adult influences. However, the literature is limited in its scope given a lack of research regarding the student-administrator relationship. My study helps feel this gap by providing in-depth narratives that highlight the relationships between students and administrators.

Meaningful Involvement

Research defined meaningful involvement as occurrences that clarify personal values and interests and assist students with learning about themselves and developing new skills (Komives et al., 2005). For the participants, these experiences ranged from homecoming activities to historical events. The participants expressed three themes relating to their meaningful involvement: sense of accomplishment, inspiration, and relationships.

The participants began by discussing a sense of accomplishment. This theme was mostly related to providing programs and events. As a result of the events, the participants vocalized several outcomes that are directly aligned with the outcomes of confidence and self-worth, altruism, reflective thought, social competence, practical competence, and aesthetic appreciation mentioned in Kuh (1994). Also, the finding of sense of accomplishment aligns with the findings of Scott (2017) and Sturts and Ross (2013) supporting that Black student involvement leads to gains in intellectual and social skills.

Similar to the sense of accomplishment finding, the inspiration theme is also supported by previous research (Gipson & Michell, 2017; Kuh, 1994). The participants

explained how meaningful involvement opportunities served as an inspiration to continue their initiatives or achieve their goals. This type of inspiration led to gains in confidence, altruism, and aesthetic appreciation (Kuh, 1994). The participants used their inspiration to increase their levels of confidence in their ability to lead, their respect and understanding of others, and their appreciation for Black history. Additionally, some of the participants attributed their gains in confidence and altruism to participating in high impact programs (Gipson & Mitchell, 2017) such as conferences, seminars, and workshops. The participants capitalized on their inspiration to foster gains in personal development.

Lastly, the Black SGA presidents discussed using meaningful involvement to expand their network by building relationships with others. This finding is an example of developing social competence (Flowers, 2004; Kuh, 1994, Lindsey, 2012; Sturks & Ross 2013) which is one of the prominent themes across student involvement literature. Researchers have shown students who are actively involved in campus events, organizations, and programs exhibit gains in social skills such as getting along with others, cultural collaboration, and working in a team (Flowers, 2004; Sturks & Ross, 2013). The participants alluded to sharing values with others and having the capacity to understand their peers. The literature supports the assertion that student involvement fosters gains in developing social skills.

The HBCU Context

One of the key elements to this study was the unique culture of the various institutions. As expressed in chapter two, HBCUs were created with a specific purpose to educate freed slaves (Avery, 2009). Through discrimination and systemic oppression,

these institutions were and still are not treated with the same standards of other institution types across the nation. This discrimination is also reflected in the current body of literature as explained by Smith (2018). In this piece, I make a strong argument for more research to be conducted to illuminate the student experiences of these institutions. Hence, one of the aims of this particular study was to explore the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. These findings will help us better understand the culture of Black student involvement at these institutions while also illuminating some unknown elements of the universities that is currently lacking in the literature.

For example, the findings related to support (peer influence & adult influence) and building relationships (peer influence & meaningful involvement) give researchers a new perspective on support and social relationships at HBCUs. Many of the participants spoke of the importance of having support and building relationships within their HBCU and amongst other HBCUS. These findings speak to the family aspect of HBCUs which Esters and Strayhorn (2013) alluded to. Esters and Strayhorn (2013) referred to HBCUs as The People's University which was described as family network of support, uplift, and love.

Other participants like Ace, Ri Ri, and Kayla articulated their feelings of inspiration and a sense of accomplishment. Similar to the findings of Wenglinsky (1996), the participants in this study alluded to their aspirations being influenced during their time at their respective HBCU. The participants spoke of having increased desires and aspirations to change their institutions and communities. These aspirations where attributed to numerous events and occurrences that were unique to the HBCU culture

such as attending the Thurgood Marshall conference, the various football classics and homecomings, and attending the Student Leadership Institute of the National Association for Student Affairs Professionals (NASAP). NASAP is a professional organization that is dedicated to the professional development of students, faculty, staff, and alumni of HBCUs.

The participants also highlighted an elephant in the room regarding the negative impacts of administrators not fully understanding the unique HBCU culture. There are a lot of unspoken rules and beliefs manifested with the circle of HBCUs. For example. I have experienced numerous professionals speak negatively of their ability to acquire employment at HBCUs with their lack of experience working at HBCUs on their resumes. These professionals referred to this phenomenon as "breaking in." I believe this phenomenon of not being hired based on your lack of HBCU experience is complex and is rooted in a sense of protection for the HBCU culture and fear of a change in HBCU culture. An example of this fear playing out in a practical setting could be found in Ri Ri and Flash's interviews. They spoke of two administrators who they described as outsiders. Ri Ri and Flash discussed a lack of support which they believed steam from the administrators lack of awareness related to understanding the unspoken norms of HBCUs. Both of the administrators Flash and Ri Ri spoke of did not have a background in working at HBCUs. Ri Ri and Flash believed their lack of HBCU experience negatively impacted their ability to support, advise, and mentor them as Black student leaders. Another intersectional aspect that must be mentioned in the impact of race which

Ri Ri spoke of regarding her white Vice President of Student Affairs. Ri Ri discussed race as another factor which led to a lack of support from her administrator.

In sum, these findings are simply a microscopic piece to a macroscopic world of understanding the unique culture of HBCUs. No way was this study designed to generalize out to a larger HBCU context. Yet, the participants provided us with an opportunity to gain a small glimpse of the HBCU culture through their eyes. I hope these findings add to the current body of literature and inspire more researchers to pick up the research baton to assist in illuminating the various nuances of the HBCU college experience.

To conclude, my findings were generally supported by one of the seminal pieces regarding the outcomes associated with participating in SGA (Kuh, 1994). However, Kuh (1994) failed to include some marginalized populations in his work. Furthermore, it was beyond the scope of Kuh to identify the experiences that led to the outcomes such as confidence, altruism, developing social skills, cultural collaboration, reflective thought, and autonomy. My findings add to the current body of literature because I highlight those experiences that fostered certain outcomes for Black SGA presidents at HBCUs.

Implications for Practice

This study was birthed out of my own experiences as a Black SGA President at Alabama State University. I was afforded the opportunity to work closely with the Black SGA presidents who came before and after me. After hearing their stories, I became passionate about learning more about the experience of other Black SGA presidents from various HBCUs.

I am an advocate for disseminating knowledge and wisdom. I believe no person should make the same mistakes or fall into the same potholes I have fallen into. I wanted to use my platform as a doctoral student and emerging researcher to uplift the voices of those who share(d) similar experiences as my previous ones. Hence, I set out to explore the experiences of Black SGA presidents in order to illuminate their stories. Ultimately, this study was conducted for administrators, faculty, staff, students, and anyone who plays a part in the experiences of Black SGA presidents.

As a researcher, my goal is not to research for research's sake. Yet, I want to conduct research to better inform daily practices within the field of higher. In the following sections, I make recommendations for practice and research regarding improving the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs.

Advisors

As shown in Chapter Four, faculty, staff, and administrators play a vital role in the experiences of Black SGA presidents. Those influences have the capacity to impact Black SGA presidents positively or negatively. I use this section to make recommendations on how to improve the experiences of Black SGA presidents.

First, advisors should employ a holistic approach to advising (Bloom, Hutson, & Konkle, 2013) rather than limiting their perspective to SGA business. The students are not only SGA presidents, but they are also students. This means the students will be faced with issues outside of SGA which tend to impact their overall health. Student affairs educators have an obligation to advise the "whole" student not just the SGA president role. Thus, advisors must pay closer attention to the overall well-being of the student.

This could be done by hosting reoccurring check-in meetings focused on the student's personal health rather than SGA issues. Advisors also have a responsibility to protect the students from being over consumed with everyday SGA issues which could lead to students neglecting their academics, health, and career plans. I recommend meeting with the students in the beginning of their term to co-construct guard rails for their term. These guard rails could be used to set time aside to relax, focus on schoolwork, or focus on professional goals. Regardless, advisors should assist the students in creating and practicing a healthy work-life balance.

My second recommendation is for advisors to research and understand the duties, responsibilities, and expectations of their role as advisor. Some of the participants spoke to their advisors being barriers during their term as SGA presidents. To avoid being a barrier, advisors should understand what they are signing up for. As an advisor, your role is to support, advocate, and advise. This means you run the risk of going against your employer. If you are not willing to stand with the students at all costs then being an SGA advisor might not be the most appropriate role. The last thing a Black SGA president needs is their advisor being a hinderance to their initiatives and goals. Thus, advisors need to fully examine the role in which they are asked to serve and understand the expectations of their role in its entirety. This could be achieved through professional organizations that provide collective communities for advisors. Organizations such as American College Personnel Association, National Association for Student Personnel Administrators, and National Association for Student Affairs Professionals provide

professional development opportunities for these practitioners. I would like to see it taken a step further to provide some type of training certification for working with SGAs.

My last recommendation is for advisors to be intentional on building authentic relationships with the Black SGA presidents. Communication is a vital part to the success of any organization. Thus, advisors should be willing to build relationships in order to better understand the Black SGA presidents so that they can properly advise the student on what is in their best interest. Some of the participants spoke to lack of support as a result of miscommunication, a lack of understanding, and an unwillingness to understand the perspective of the students. I believe these issues could be avoided if the advisor was intentional on building authentic relationships with the Black SGA president as described in Bloom et al. (2013).

In sum, advisors play a major role in the success of the Black SGA presidents as highlighted in Chapter Four. I believe the experiences of Black SGA presidents can be improved if advisors use a holistic approach to advising, understand the role of advisor in its entirety, and seek to build authentic relationships with the Black SGA presidents. However, these recommendations are only a fraction to the puzzle. Black SGA presidents also have a role in improving their experiences. I discuss my implications for practice for Black SGA presidents in the following section.

Black SGA Presidents

Black SGA presidents has as much at stake, if not more, in their success as their advisors do. I use the following sections to outline my recommendations for practice for

Black SGA presidents. Moving from a traditional approach, I outline my

recommendations for Black SGA presidents in the form of a letter to my younger self.

Dear Black SGA President,

If only you could have read this letter prior to you taking office. I write

with the mere intent to retroactively give you a heads up regarding the things you

should do and avoid during your tenure as SGA president. First off, this will be

one of the hardest things you will ever have to do in life. Yet it will be one of the

most joyous times of your life. If I were you, I would create concrete and tangible

goals. I understand you want to save the university, but that shift cannot be done

in one year. As the old saying goes, Rome was not built in one day (that we know

of). So, I advise you not to attempt to be a superhero. Do what you can when you

can and count your small accomplishments. Next, do not allow this position to

consume you. You are in college to learn, explore, grow, and develop. This

position is just another opportunity for you to do those things.

There will come a time in which you will have to relinquish your title and

power. Will you be ready for that day? I hope you set aside time to relax, study,

and enjoy time with your friends. This position is not the end of the world. It is the

beginning to a life that few are able to witness. With that being said, take care of

yourself. Your health matters and nothing in this world is worth you losing your

health over. Also, be easy on your advisors. Remember they are human and will

make mistakes just like you. Be open and transparent with them and most

importantly be willing to listen. I know you might think they are out of touch with

the student body but give them a chance. Most times they know way more than

what we give them credit for.

> *Lastly, but most importantly, remember your why. Do not allow the power*
> *of the position to corrupt you. Remember your platform and why you decided to*
> *run. There will come a time when you have to decide which side of the fence you*
> *will be on; I hope you choose the right side. In closing, take advantage of this*
> *opportunity but most importantly protect yourself.*

Sincerely,

Black SGA President.

Overall, Black SGA presidents have an opportunity to better their experiences as student leaders. I recommend these leaders to set clear goals and plans for the academic year while incorporating time for themselves to relax and grow as individuals. I also recommend Black SGA presidents be open and willing to listen to their advisors. Lastly, I advise these leaders to stay true to their morals and values. I believe doing these things will help create a better experience for Black SGA presidents.

Implications for Future Research

This study provided the experiences of nine Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. I was able to understand how peers, administrators, faculty, staff, and meaningful involvement influenced the participants experiences. Through this study, I was able to add to the body of literature regarding the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. Yet, this study is just the tip of the iceberg regarding research on Black student involvement at HBCUs. More research needs to be done to gain a better understanding of

the experiences of Black students who are involved in campus organizations and various groups at HBCUs.

Black Student Involvement

The experiences of Black students at HBCUs should not be essentialized or put into a box. There is a need for research regarding the experiences of Black students at HBCUs that goes beyond measuring achievement or comparing the experiences of Black students at HBCUs to predominately white institutions. The HBCU culture within itself presents a unique opportunity to understand the lived experiences of Black students beyond the classroom. Thus, I propose the following questions as a guide for future researchers:

- How do Black HBCU students make meaning of their HBCU experiences?

- How do Black students at HBCUs define involvement?

- How do Black HBCU students make meaning of their marginalized identities at HBCUs?

  o What mechanisms support or hinder their development as students?

- How does student involvement influence the holistic development of Black students at HBCUs?

  o What outcomes are presented as a result of being involved?

- What are the lived experiences of Black students at HBCUs who are involved in marching bands, modeling companies, class councils, royal court, religious groups, political groups, or affinity groups?

  o Do these experiences enhance or hinder student development?

- How do intersecting identities (race, class, gender, ability) inform leadership development for Black students at HBCUs?

- What role does Black Greek-Lettered Organizations play in being elected for the position of SGA president?

Advisors

Similar to the previous section, more research should be conducted to understand the lived experiences of student organization advisors at HBCUs. The participants discussed the role of their advisors and mentors from their personal point of view. As a constructivist, I believe we create and interpret our own realities. Therefore, researchers should explore the narratives of advisors as well. This type of research might shed light on issues occurring within the institution context and their understanding of the role and responsibilities of the advisor. Researchers may be able to use such data to identify and address problems of practice regarding the culture of advising and expectations of the advisor for student organizations. The following research questions should be considered for future research:

- What are the lived experiences of Black student organization advisors at HBCUs?

- How do Black student organization advisors make meaning of their experiences as a student organizational advisor?
  - How do they define their role as an advisor?
  - What challenges do they face in their role as advisors?

- How do institutional culture influence the experiences of advisors?

- What function do HBCUs play in preparing and equipping Black student organization advisors for their role?

- What do Black student organization advisors identify as best practices regarding advising Black student organizations at HBCUs?

- What role does research play in decision making for Black student organization advisors?

Conclusion

Dating back to 2009, student government (SGA) has been a prominent piece to my identity. I personally witnessed the impact SGA had on Black students during and after my time at Alabama State University. This research study is more than five chapters of work; it is my life's passion. I am honored to have the opportunity to share the experiences of nine other Black SGA presidents from HBCUs. Through meeting or reconnecting with the presidents, I saw and heard the passionate outcry to work within and uplift their community. Each individual Black SGA president became vulnerable and allowed me the opportunity to see inside their lock box of memories. They shared the good, the bad, and the other while alluding to the fact they would do it all again. I appreciate their dedication to their student bodies and universities as well as their life-long commitment to serving HBCUs in various capacities.

Through this study, I illuminate the untold experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. I intend for this study to be the beginning to life-long research of the lived experiences of Black students at HBCUs. In all, I leave the readers with a quote from one of the participants that resonated with me, "we are human too.". So as everyone read

current research about HBCU students situated in deficit perspectives like decreasing

achievement gaps, having grit, and random success stories, never forget we are humans

too and no one should have to be celebrated for surviving the oppression Olympics filled

with intentional inhumane conditions just to be equal. I challenge you to change your

perspective and the way you narrate the lives of Black students.

References

Aagaard, J. (2017). Introducing post-phenomenological research: A brief and selective

sketch of phenomenological research methods. *International Journal of*

Qualitative Studies in Education, *30*(6), 519-533, DOI:

10.1080/09518398.2016.1263884

Allen, W. (1992). The color of success: African-American college student outcomes at

predominantly white and historically Black public colleges and universities.

Harvard Educational Review, *62*(1), 26-45.

Allen, W. R., & Jewell, J. O. (2002). A backward glance forward: Past, present and future

perspectives on historically Black colleges and universities. *The Review of Higher*

Education, *25*(3), 241-261.

Allen, W. R., Jewell, J. O., Griffin, K. A., & Wolf, D. S. S. (2007). Historically Black

colleges and universities: Honoring the past, engaging the present, touching the

future. *The Journal of Negro Education 76(3)*, 263-280.

Arminio, J., & Hultgren, F. H. (2002). Breaking out from the shadow: The question of

criteria in qualitative research. *Journal of College Student Development*, *43*(4),

446-460.

Astin, A. W. (1977). *Four critical years*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher

education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, *25,* 297-308.

Astin, A. W. (1996). Involvement in learning revisited: Lessons we have learned.

Journal of College Student Development, *37*(2), 123-34.

Avery, S. (2009). Taking the pulse of historically black colleges. *Academic*

    Questions, *22*(3), 327-339.

Ayers v. Allain, 674 F. Supp. 1523 (N.D. Miss. 1987)

Ayers v. Fordice, 879 F. Supp. 1419 (N.D. Miss. 1995)

Ayers v. Fordice, 40 F. Supp. 2d 382 (N.D. Miss. 1999)

Ayers v. Thompson, 358 F. Supp. 3d 356 (N.D. Miss. 2004)

Baker, C. N. (2008). Under-represented college students and extracurricular involvement:

    The effects of various student organizations on academic performance. *Social*

    Psychology of Education, *11*(3), 273-298.

Balenger, V. J., & Sedlacek, W. E. (1993). Black and white student differences in

    volunteer interests at a predominantly white university. *NASPA Journal*, *30*(3),

    203-208.

Banks, M., & Zeitlyn, D. (2015). *Visual methods in social research*. Los Angeles, CA:

    Sage.

Boucher, M. L. (2018). *Participant empowerment through photo-elicitation in*

    ethnographic education: Research and approaches. New York, NY: Springer.

Brittian, A. S., Sy, S. R., & Stokes, J. E. (2009). Mentoring: Implications for African

    American college students. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, *33*(2), 87-97.

Belch, H. A., Gebel, M., & Maas, G. M. (2001). Relationship between student recreation

    complex use, academic performance, and persistence of first-time freshmen.

    NASPA Journal, *38*(2), 254-268.

Bensimon, E. M. (2007). The underestimated significance of practitioner knowledge in

the scholarship on student success. *The Review of Higher Education*, *30*(4), 441-

469.

Bloom, J. L., Hutson, B. L., He, Y., & Konkle, E. (2013). Appreciative education. *New*

Directions for Student Services, *143*(2013), 5-18.

Bukola, A. B. (2014). Students' participation in governance and organizational

effectiveness in universities in Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences,*

(5), 400-401. doi:10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n9p400

Carey, P. (2013). Student engagement: Stakeholder perspectives on course representation

in university governance. *Studies in Higher Education, 38*(9), 1290-1304.

doi:10.1080/03075079.2011.621022

Cress, C. M., Astin, H. S., Zimmerman-Oster, K., & Burkhardt, J. C. (2001).

Developmental outcomes of college students' involvement in leadership

activities. *Journal of College Student Development, 42*(1), 15-27.

Chambers, C. R. (2013). Rawlsian justice and the Ayers settlement. *Educational*

Policy, *27(*6), 898-922.

Chang, J. C. (2005). Faculty student interaction at the community college: A focus on

students of color. *Research in Higher Education*, *46*(7), 769-802.

Chen, S., Snyder, S., & Magner, M. (2010). The effects of sport participation on student-

athletes' and non-athlete students' social life and identity. *Journal of Issues in*

Intercollegiate Athletics, *3*(1), 176-193.

Croom, N. N. (2017). Promotion beyond tenure: Unpacking racism and sexism in

the experiences of Black womyn professors. *The Review of Higher Education,* *40*(4), 557- 583.

DeSousa, D. J., & Kuh, G. D. (1996). Does institutional racial composition make a difference in what Black students gain from college? *Journal of College Student Development*, *37*(3), 257-267.

Diorio, K. (2007). *Perceived benefits of involvement in student government.* Retrieved from http://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/786

Downs, P. E. (2003). Value of Recreational Sports on College Campuses-Introduction. *Recreational Sports Journal*, *27*(1), 5-8.

DuBois, W. E. B. (1989) *The soul of black folks* (Originally published in 1903). New York, NY: Bantam.

Dugan, J. P. (2006). Involvement and leadership: A descriptive analysis of socially responsible leadership. *Journal of College Student Development*, *47*(3), 335-343.

Flowers, L. A. (2004). Examining the effects of student involvement on African American college student development. *Journal of College Student Development*, *45*(6), 633-654.

Economic Impact Report. (2006). Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007178.pdf

Esters, L. L., & Strayhorn, T. L. (2013). Demystifying the contributions of public land-grant historically black colleges and universities*. Voices of HBCU Presidents. *Negro Educational Review, 64*, 119-134.

Finlay, L. (2009). Debating phenomenological research methods. *Phenomenology & Practice*, *3*(1), 6-25.

Freeman, K., & Cohen, R. T. (2001). Bridging the gap between economic development and cultural empowerment: HBCUs' challenges for the future. *Urban Education*, *36*(5), 585-596.

Freidson, E. & Shuchman, H. L. (1955). Student government in American colleges. In E. Freidson (Ed.), *Student government, student leaders, and the American college* (pp. 3-28). Philadelphia, PA: United States National Student Association.

Gill, M. J. (2015). A phenomenology of feeling: Examining the experience of emotion in organizations. In C. E. Hartel, W. J. Zerbe, & N. M. Ashkanasy (Eds.), *New ways of studying emotions in organizations,* (pp. 29-50). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group.

Gipson, J., & Mitchell, D. (2017). How high-impact practices influence academic achievement for African American college students. *Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity*, *3*(2), 124-144.

Glesne, C. (2016). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Guba, E. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic. *Educational Communication and Technology*, *29*(2), 75-91.

Guiffrida, D. A. (2003). African American student organizations as agents of social integration. *Journal of College Student Development*, *44*(3), 304-319.

Guiffrida, D. A., & Douthit, K. Z. (2010). The Black student experience at predominantly

white colleges: Implications for school and college counselors. *Journal of*

Counseling & Development, *88*(3), 311-318.

Hall, A. L. (2018). HBCUs matter: The lived experiences of involved student-athletes

changing the game. Retrieved from

https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations/2170

Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual*

studies, *17*(1), 13-26.

Harper, S. R. (2006). Enhancing African American male student outcomes through

leadership and active involvement. *African American Men in College*, 1, 174-188.

Harper, S. R. (2009). Race-conscious student engagement practices and equitable

distribution of enriching educational experiences. *Liberation Education*, *95*(4),

38-45.

Harper, S. R., & Quaye, S. J. (2007). Student organizations as venues for Black identity

expression and development among African American male student leaders.

Journal of College Student Development, *48*(2), 127-144.

Hausmann, L., Schofield, J., & Woods, R. (2007). Sense of belonging as a predictor of

intentions to persist among African American and white first-year college

students. *Research in Higher Education, 48*(7), 803-839.

Helms, J. E. (Ed.). (1990). *Black and white racial identity theory, research, and practice*.

Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Hrabowski, F. A., & Maton, K. I. (2009). Change institutional culture, and you change

    who goes into science. *Academe*, *95*(3), 11-15.

Hu, Y., Manikonda, L., & Kambhampati, S. (2014, May). What we Instagram: A first

    analysis of Instagram photo content and user types. In *Eighth International AAAI*

    conference on weblogs and social media. Retrieved from

    https://www.aaai.org/ocs/index.php/ICWSM/ICWSM14/paper/download/8118/80

    87

Huang, Y. R., & Chang, S. M. (2004). Academic and co-curricular involvement: Their

    relationship and the best combinations for student growth. *Journal of College*

    Student Development, *45*(4), 391-406.

Husserl, E. (1999). *The essential Husserl: Basic writings in transcendental*

    phenomenology. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Inkelas, K. K., & Weisman, J. L. (2003). Different by design: An examination of student

    outcomes among participants in three types of living-learning programs. *Journal*

    of College Student Development, *44*(3), 335-368.

Jacoby, B. (1991). Today's students: Diverse needs require comprehensive responses. In

    T. Miller & R. Winston (Eds.), *Administration and leadership in student affairs*

    (pp. 281-307). Muncie, IN: Accelerated Development.

Johnson, J. M., & McGowan, B. L. (2017). Untold stories: The gendered experiences of

    high achieving African American male alumni of historically Black colleges and

    universities. *Journal of African American Males in Education*, *8*(1), 23-44.

Kezar, A. (2006). Rethinking public higher education governing boards performance: Results of a national study of governing boards in the United States. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *77*(6), 968-1008.

Kimbrough, W., & Hutcheson, P. (1998). The impact of membership in black Greek letter organizations on black students' involvement in collegiate activities and their development of leadership skills. *The Journal of Negro Education, 67*(2), 96-105. doi:10.2307/2668220

Knight v. State of Ala., 787 F. Supp. 1030 (N.D. Ala. 1991)

Knight v. State of Alabama, 900 F. Supp. 272 (N.D. Ala. 1995)

Knight v. Alabama, 469 F. Supp. 2d 1016 (N.D. Ala. 2006)

Komives, S. R., Dugan, J. P., Owen, J. E., Slack, C., & Wagner, W. (Eds.). (2011). *Handbook for student leadership development* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Komives, S. R., Longerbeam, S. D., Owen, J. E., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2006). A leadership identity development model: Applications from a grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, *47*(4), 401-418.

Komives, S. R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T. R. (2013). *Exploring leadership: For college students who want to make a difference*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Komives, S. R., Owen, J. E., Longerbeam, S. D., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2005). Developing a leadership identity: A grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, *46*(6), 593-611.

Kuh, G. D. (1993). In their own words: What students learn outside the classroom. *American Educational Research Journal, 30*(2), 277-304. doi:10.2307/11632361

Kuh, G. D., & Lund, J. P. (1994). What students gain from participating in student government. *New Directions for Student Services*, (66), 5–17. doi:10.1002/ss.37119946603

Laosebikan-Buggs, M. (2009). *An investigation of the impact of student government involvement at one public historically black university on the career choice of african american student participants* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from http://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/1102

Leath, S., & Chavous, T. (2018). Black women's experiences of campus racial climate and stigma at predominantly white institutions: Insights from a comparative and within-group approach for stem and non-stem majors. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *87*(2), 125-139.

Lindsey, R. R. (2012). The benefits and satisfaction of participating in campus recreational sports facilities and programs among male and female African American students: A pilot study. *Recreational Sports Journal*, *36*(1), 13-24.

Littleton, R. A. (2002). Campus involvement among African American students at small, predominantly white colleges. *College Student Affairs Journal*, *21*(2), 53.

Livingston, M. D., & Stewart, M. A. (1987). Minority students on a white campus: Perceptions is truth. *NASPA Journal*, *24*, 39-49.

Lizzio, A., & Wilson, K. (2009). Student participation in university governance: The role conceptions and sense of efficacy of student representatives on departmental

committees. *Studies in Higher Education, 34*(1), 69-84.

doi:10.1080/03075070802602000

Lockett, L. L., & Boyd, B. (2012). Enhancing Leadership Skills in Volunteers. *Journal of Leadership Education*, *11*(1), 233-244.

Lochmiller, C. R., & Lester, J. N. (2017). *An introduction to educational research: Connecting methods to practice.* Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

Logue, C. T., Hutchens, T. A., Hector, M. A. (2005). Student leadership: A phenomenological exploration of postsecondary experiences. *Journal of College Student Development*, *46*(4), 393-408.

Love, R., & Miller, M. (2003). Increasing student participation in self-governance: A comparison of graduate and undergraduate student perceptions. *College Student Journal, 37*(4), 532.

Lundberg, C. A., & Schreiner, L. A. (2004). Quality and frequency of faculty-student interaction as predictors of learning: An analysis by student race/ethnicity. *Journal of College Student Development, 45,* 549-565.

Mason, D., & Robertson, R. V. (2008). What works? A qualitative examination of the factors related to the academic success of African American males at a predominantly White college in the south. *Challenge - A Journal of Research on African American Men, 14*(2), 67-89.

May, W. P. (2010). The history of student governance in higher education. *College Student Affairs Journal*, *28*(2), 207-220.

May, W. P. (2009). *Student governance: A qualitative study of leadership in a student government association.* Retrieved from http://libproxy.clemson.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.clemson.edu/docview/304884460?accountid=6167

Merriam, S. B., & Associates. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysi*s. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, J. (2010). Experiences of community college student leaders. *The Community College Enterprise*, *16*(2), 77.

Miles, J. M. (2011). Reflections of student government association leaders: Implications for advisors. *College Student Journal*, *45*(2), 324-333.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

Moore, P. L. (1995). Perspectives on student participation in university governance: An update. *NASPA Journal*, *32*(3), 198-207.

Moore, J., Lovell, C. D., McGann, T., & Wyrick, J. (1998). Why involvement matters: A review of research on student involvement in the collegiate setting. *College Student Affairs Journal*, *17*(2), 4.

Museus, S. D. (2008). The role of ethnic student organizations in fostering African American and Asian American students' cultural adjustment and membership at

predominantly white institutions. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(6), 568-586.

Nazir, J. (2016). Using phenomenology to conduct environmental education research: Experience and issues. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, *47*(3), 179-190.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2004). *Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 1976 to 2001*. Retrieved from: https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004062.pdf

Nevin, M. J. (2017). *Addressing the learning outcomes and assessment methods associated with participation in student government associations: A qualitative study of California community colleges*. Retrieved from http://libproxy.clemson.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.clemson.edu/docview/1934310110?accountid=616

Outcalt, C. L., & Skewes-Cox, T. E. (2002). Involvement, interaction, and satisfaction: The human environment at HBCU's. *The Review of Higher Education*, *25*(3), 331-347.

Otten, C. M. (1970). *University authority and the student: The Berkeley experience*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Patterson, M., & Williams, D. R. (2002). *Collecting and analyzing qualitative data: Hermeneutic principles, methods, and case examples*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing.

Patton, M. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage

Patton, L. D., Bridges, B. K., & Flowers, L. A. (2011). Effects of Greek affiliation on

    African American student engagement: Differences by college racial composition.

    College Student Affairs Journal, 29(2), 113-123.

Perna, L. W. (2001). The contribution of historically black colleges and universities to

    the preparation of African Americans for faculty careers. *Research in Higher*

    Education, *42*(3), 267-294.

Sav, G. T. (2010). Funding historically black colleges and universities: Progress toward

    equality? *Journal of Education Finance*,*35*(3), 295-307.

Schuh, J. H., & Laverty, M. (1983). The perceived long-term influence of holding a

    significant student leadership position. *Journal of College Student Personnel*,

    24(1), 28-32.

Scott, I. D. (2017). *Factors influencing the academic performance of African American*

    student-athletes in historically black colleges and universities. Retrieved from

    http://thesportjournal.org/article/factors-influencing-the-academic-performance-

    of-african-american-student-athletes-in-historically-black-colleges-and-

    universities/

Shehane, M. R., Sturtevant, K. A., Moore, L. L., & Dooley, K. E. (2012). First-year

    student perceptions related to leadership awareness and influences. *Journal of*

    Leadership Education, *11*(1), 140-155.

Smith, E. A., Miller, M. T., & Nadler, D. P. (2016). Does it matter? What college student

    governments talk about. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 16*(2),

    46-53.

Sokolowski, R. (2000). *Introduction to phenomenology*. New York, NY: Cambridge

    University Press.

Somers, W. (Ed.). (2003). *Encyclopedia of Union College history*. Schenectady, NY:

    Union College Press.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2008). How college students' engagement affects personal and social

    learning outcomes. *Journal of College and Character, 10*(2). doi: 10.2202/1940-

    1639.1071

Strayhorn, T. L., & Saddler, T. N. (2009). Gender differences in the influence of faculty –

    student mentoring relationships on satisfaction with college among African

    Americans. *Journal of African American Studies*, *13*(4), 476-493.

Stewart, D. L. (2010). Researcher as instrument: Understanding "shifting" findings in

    constructivist research. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *47*(3),

    291-306. doi: 10.2202/1949-6605.6130

Sturts, J. R., & Ross, C. M. (2013). Collegiate Intramural sports participation: Identified

    social outcomes. *International Journal of Sport Management, Recreation &*

    Tourism, 11, 25-44.

Sutton, E. M., & Kimbrough, W. M. (2001). Trends in Black student involvement.

    NASPA Journal, 39(1), 30-40.

Taylor, C. M., & Howard-Hamilton, M. F. (1995). Student involvement and racial

    identity attitudes among African American males. *Journal of College Student*

    Development, *36*, 330-330.

Torres, V., & Magolda, M. B. B. (2002). The evolving role of the researcher in constructivist longitudinal studies. *Journal of College Student Development*, *43*(4), 474.

Twale, D., & Sanders, C. S. (1999). Impact of non-classroom experiences on critical thinking ability. *NASPA Journal*, *36*(2), 133-146.

Ullah, H., & Wilson, M. A. (2007). Students' academic success and its association to student involvement with learning and relationships with faculty and peers. *College Student Journal*, *41*(4), 1192-1203.

United States v. Fordice,, 1992, 505 U.S. 717

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* London, UK: Althouse Press.

Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1994). Empowerment through photo novella: Portraits of participation. *Health Education Quarterly*, *21*(2), 171-186.

Washington, B. T. (1986) *Up from Slavery* (New York, Penguin Books).

Watson, L., & Kuh, G. (1996). The influence of dominant race environments on student involvement, perceptions, and educational gains: A look at historically Black and predominantly white liberal arts institutions. *Journal of College Student Development*, 37(4), 415-24.

Wenglinsky, H. H. (1996). The educational justification of historically Black colleges and universities: A policy response to the US Supreme Court. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *18*(1), 91-103.

Xiaojie, L. (2007). *NCES minority serving institution report*. Retrieved from

https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008156

Zhang, Y., Fei, Q., Quddus, M., & Davis, C. (2014). An examination of the impact of

early intervention on learning outcomes of at-risk students. *Research in Higher*

Education Journal, 26. 1-12.

Appendices

Appendix A: Clemson University IRB Approval

Nalinee Patin   📁 Inbox - Clemson   June 11, 2019 at 1:17 PM   **NP**

Exempt Determination for IRB2019-159: Examining the Experiences of Black SGA Presi...   **Details**

To: Robin J Phelps-Ward, Cc: Travis C. Smith

Dear Dr. Phelps-Ward,

The Clemson University Office of Research Compliance reviewed the protocol titled **"Picture This: Examining the Experiences of Black SGA Presidents at HBCUs Using Photo-elicitation"** and a determination was made on June 11, 2019 that the proposed activities involving human participants qualify as **Exempt under category 2** in accordance with federal regulations 45 CFR 46.104(d), http://media.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/new_exempt_categories.pdf.

No further action, amendments, or IRB oversight of the protocol is required except in the following situations:
1. Substantial changes made to the protocol that could potentially change the review level. Researchers who modify the study purpose, study sample, or research methods and instruments in ways not covered by the exempt categories will need to submit an expedited or full board review application.
2. Occurrence of unanticipated problem or adverse event; any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, complications, and/or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance immediately.
3. Change in Principal Investigator (PI)

All research involving human participants must maintain an ethically appropriate standard, which serves to protect the rights and welfare of the participants. This involves obtaining informed consent and maintaining confidentiality of data. Research related records should be retained for a minimum of three (3) years after completion of the study.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact us if you have any questions and use the IRB number and title when referencing the study in future correspondence.

All the best,
Nalinee

Nalinee Patin, CIP
IRB Administrator
OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
Clemson University, Division of Research
391 College Avenue, Suite 406, Clemson, SC 29631, USA
P: 864-656-0636
www.clemson.edu/research

This message and any attachments contain information which may be confidential and privileged. Unless you are the addressee (or authorized to receive for the addressee), you may not use, copy or disclose to anyone the message or any information contained in the message. If you have received the message in error, please advise the sender by reply e-mail and delete the message.

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Telephone and Email Script

Hello, my name is Travis Smith and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Educational Leadership (Higher Education) program at Clemson University. I plan to conduct a qualitative research study to explore examine the experiences of SGA presidents at an HBCU This study is being conducted by myself under the direct supervision of my Chair and Assistant Professor of Higher Education and Student Affairs, Dr. Robin Phelps-Ward at Clemson University.

The purpose of this study is to understand how meaningful involvement, administrators, faculty, staff, and peers influence the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. I seek to explore those influences to understand the complex experiences of SGA presidents at HBCUs. The hope is this study will provide in-depth information to SGA advisors, student affairs professionals, and administrators regarding how SGA presidents navigate their experiences.

You are receiving this (call or email) because you were recommended by a former SGA officer. Due to your involvement as an SGA president, you were identified as a possible participant for this study. I am seeking your participation in the following:

- Initial Meeting (approximately 30 minutes)
- Capture/locate and submit photographs (approximately 30-60)
- an individual one-on-one audio recorded interview (approximately 45-60 minutes)
- member checking follow-up to review themes (approximately 15-20 minutes)

If you agree to participate in this study, you will have the ability to select a pseudonym). Your participation is voluntary and as a participant you are free to stop participating at any point in time and may choose not to engage with any portions of the study should you choose not to.

Appendix C: Initial Meeting Guide

My name is Travis Smith and I would like to thank you for participating in the study which seeks to explore the experiences of SGA presidents at an HBCU suing photo-elicitation. I would like you to know I served as a SGA presidents during the 2011-2012 academic school year. There is a possibility that we will share similar experiences and understandings. I am currently a Ph.D. candidate in educational leadership at Clemson University. I would like to take this time to learn more about one another. Feel free to ask me any questions about myself at any point in this interview.

Listed below are several demographic questions to help us learn more about you.

1.   What name (pseudonym) would you like to be referred to as throughout this study?

2.   What was your major?

3.   Which year did you serve as SGA president?

4.   What is your current occupation?

6.   Please describe your race.

7.   What is your gender?

8.   What is your age?

10.   Where are you from geographically speaking (i.e., state and country)?

11.   What other activities or organizations did you participate in during your time in undergrad?

12.   How would you describe your college experience at an HBCU?

Appendix D: Informed Consent

Picture this: Examining the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs using photo-eliciation.

Description of the Study and Your Part in It

Travis Smith, under the direction of the Principal Investigator, Dr. Robin Phelps-Ward is inviting you to take part in a research study. Dr. Phelps-Ward is a faculty member at Clemson University, and Travis Smith is a doctoral candidate at Clemson University. The purpose of this research is to examine the experiences of SGA presidents at an HBCU.

Your part in the study will be to share your experiences as a SGA president at an HBCU so that I can understand how meaningful involvement, administrators, faculty, staff, and peers influence those experiences.

It will take you about a total of two (2) to four (4) hours to be in this study, including participation in the following:

- Participate in a rapport building interview (approximately 30 minutes)
- Capture/locate and submit photographs (approximately 30-60)
- an individual one-on-one audio recorded interview (approximately 45-60 minutes)
- member checking follow-up to review themes (approximately 15-20 minutes)

Risks and Discomforts

We do not know of any risks or discomforts to you in this research study.

Possible Benefits

Although there are no direct benefit from taking part in this study. The hope is this study will provide in-depth information to SGA advisors, student affairs professionals, and administrators regarding how SGA presidents navigate their experiences. The overall benefit is understanding the experiences of SGA presidents at an HBCU

Incentives
Each participant will be given a $10 visa gift card after the interview.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym in place of their actual name. All recorded audio files will be on a password-protected computer.

All interview audio files and memos will be stored in a secure location. Each pseudonym selected by you will be used within other study documents (e.g., interview transcripts) rather than your actual name. Some of the information shared during the interview may be personal. Please do not share any information that may be sensitive or make you uncomfortable. You may refuse to answer or leave the discussion at any time if you become uncomfortable.

Your photos and the results of this study may be published in peer-reviewed journals, professional publications, or educational presentations; however, no participant or the university will be identified. The information you shared in this study will be used in future studies and will be identified by the pseudonym you provided during the study.

Choosing to Be in the Study

You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Robin Phelps-Ward at Clemson University at 864-656-4278 or rjphelp@clemson.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance at 864-656-0636 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number, 866-297-3071. The Clemson IRB will not be able to answer some study-specific questions. However,
you may contact the Clemson IRB if the research staff cannot be reached or if you wish to speak with someone other than the research staff.

Appendix E: Photo Instructions

Thank you for being willing to participate in this study <u>Picture this: Examining the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs using photo-eliciation</u>.

Participation in this study will include taking or collecting up to 10 photos in response to three prompts over the course of a week. Following the period of photography, you will email your photos to <u>travis8@g.clemson.edu</u>.

Upon receipt of your photos the I will print each one. The photos will be used during the one hour, audio-recorded interview. During the interview, you will have access to copies of the photos you took and will be asked to discuss each photograph in relation to the prompts.

The interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes, and I will keep one set of the photographs. During the interview you will be asked to sign an informed consent form and a media release form for the photographs. Your photographs will not be made public without your permission.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any point in the process.

Information on Taking Photos:
- Your photos must not include anything illegal.
- Consider focus, angle, lighting, color/contrast while taking photos.
- Keep sunlight to your back when taking photos outdoors.
- If you take pictures with people in them, the individuals in the photo will need to sign a media release form. We will provide you with copies.
- Be as creative as you like.

Contact Information
If you have any questions throughout the process of participating in this study, please contact Dr. Phelps-Ward, Ph.D., principal investigator via email (<u>rjphelp@clemson.edu</u>) or phone (864-656-4278).

Photography Prompts
Please take up to 10 photographs that highlight your experience (both positive and negative) as a SGA president at an HBCU.

Appendix F: Semi-structured interview protocol

Introduction/Opening

- What are three words that describe you?

- Why did you choose to enroll at (insert university name)?

- Describe the picture-taking/submission process for you?

- Which of the aspects of who you are stand out to you the most?

Primary Questions

- How do these photos illustrate your experience as a SGA president?

- Why did you submit this picture?

- What does this photo represent/illustrate?

- Within this group of photos which is most significant? Why?

- What skills did you learn or master as a result of being SGA president?

- Can you recall a time when you experienced any difficulties relating to meaningful involvement during your time as SGA president?

- Can you recall a time when you experienced any difficulties relating to administrative influences, faculty, and or staff influences during your time as SGA president?

- Can you recall a time when you experienced any difficulties relating to peer influences during your time as SGA president?

Closing

- What other information would you like me to know about your experiences as an SGA president at an HBCU?

Appendix G: Social Media Recruitment Script (Student)

The social media recruitment post (to be shared on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook) will include the following information and will also be accompanied by a variety of engaging images (e.g. pictures of HBCUs, pictures of college logos,)

Do you self-identify as African American or Black?

Are you a former SGA president at an HBCU?

Are you interested in sharing your experiences as a former SGA president?

Are you interested in sharing photos that highlight your experiences?

If you answered yes to the above questions, consider participating in my research study.

Hello, my name is Travis Smith and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Educational Leadership (Higher Education) program at Clemson University. I plan to conduct a qualitative research study to explore examine the experiences of SGA presidents at an HBCU. This study is being conducted by myself under the direct supervision of my Chair and Assistant Professor, Dr. Robin Phelps-Ward at Clemson University.

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of Black SGA presidents at HBCUs. The hope is this study will provide in-depth information to SGA advisors, student affairs professionals, and administrators regarding how SGA presidents navigate their experiences.

If you are interested in participating, please visit the following link to learn how to get involved. https://forms.gle/Fzc2nmrhbDVA9HAcA

Appendix H: Electronic Form